

If I Could Do It Again

by Bob Wright

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Summary: Michael Myers travels back in time to the night he first came home to relive it again, and kill his first set of victims a little differently. Will he win sooner, or can fate be changed? NOW COMPLETED.

## 1. Back in Time

IF I COULD DO IT AGAIN

BY

BOB WRIGHT

AUTHOR'S NOTE: I can't be sure of the exact copyrights for these characters, but the personage of John Carpenter is as good as any. At any rate, enjoy the story.

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><p>October 30, 1978<p>

3:02 a.m.

The skies over the lonely rural stretch of road were as dark as one might expect given the hour. An uneasy wind whipped through the fields, rattling the branches of the nearby trees. It was as if the witching hour was indeed at hand.

As such, it was only too fitting that at that moment, the sky lit up with several supersonic bangs of light, which would have been impressive to see if any motorist had been driving by. Out of the phenomena a solitary figure fell from the sky and landed with a thud on the ground. It waited until the lights subsided and the night became as dark again before rising up and looking around.

It had been a long trip back in time for Michael Myers. By his own

estimates, he'd sent ten people to their makers. when he'd broken into the facility and activated the time travel machinery. Ever since he'd learn time travel had been attained, he knew what he'd wanted to use it for.

For Michael, the thrill of the stalk wasn't what it had once been. Long after his first escape from Smith's Grove, he'd looked upon his sworn purpose in life with great enthusiasm. Time, however-and the numerous assassination attempts on him-was finally catching up with him. He no longer had the power he'd once had, and killing was no longer as thrilling for him. In short, Michael A. Myers had decided to hang it up.

But first, he wanted one last treat: to relive the greatest night of his life,his first murderous spree in Haddonfield in 1978. And this time, he intended to do things a bit differently, just to see what it felt like-and because he knew he could. During his last incarceration, Michael had been locked up for some time with Dr. Thaddeus Clugg, a deranged former magician whose primary methods of execution had been to capture his victims, let them sweat for some time, and then kill them in an overly theatrical way. By these methods, over twenty-five people had met gruesome fates before Clugg had been captured. His relating of his feats had so impressed Michael that he'd resolved to try it himself his next (and last) time out-simply wandering around waving a knife had become far too monotonous over time. As luck would have it, on Halloween of 1978, Dr. Clugg had been performing in a town just ten miles east of Haddonfield. All Michael needed to do was obtain some of the good doctor's equipment and go home. And then go after Her. While it was regrettable that he wouldn't be able to catch her and her friends by surprise as he initially had if he did it the way he was hoping to do it now, at least She'd be dead immediately, and he'd thus have fulfilled his destiny from the very start. And then he'd simply jump back into the future, hijack the first flight to South America, and live out the rest of his days in peace and quiet.

Michael looked around his landing area. He wasn't exactly sure where he'd come out, but he recognized his general location: about two hundred and ten miles to the northwest of Haddonfield. He now needed some way to get there in time to keep to his plan. He mulled over his possibilities...

...and was taken by surprise when a hand suddenly fell on his shoulder. "Hiya bud," slurred a clearly intoxicated tramp in shabby, oversized clothing, "Ya hear that thunder a couple minutes ago? Twern't callin'-HIC-for rain, ya know. Come on and-HIC-bunk up with me, buddy, and have a sip."

He dragged Michael towards his rudimentary campsite at the edge of the field by the woods and extended a whiskey bottle towards his "new friend." Michael eyed the tramp over. He was clearly an irrelevant transient; no one would miss him if he disappeared, and his death probably wouldn't affect the future much if at all. And besides, he knew he'd need some kind of disguise; they'd be coming through time after him very soon, he knew deep down, even though he'd done some damage to the equipment before he'd gone back. Better safe than sorry...

In a flash, he drew his knife and let the tramp have it in the chest. So drunk was the tramp that he only managed a low, garbled groan as

he slumped to the ground. Michael grabbed him by the feet and dragged him into the woods. Within minutes, he'd changed into the tramp's clothes and began lumbering deeper into the woods, inexorably towards Haddonfield...toward Her...

## 2. On to Haddonfield

She was running down a dark alley. How she'd gotten there she had no idea. She only knew It was right behind her...whatever It was. And she had to get out of there and fast. The end of the alley, however, seemed to get farther away with each stride she took. And Its footsteps echoed louder and louder behind her. She could hear it starting to call her name...

"Laurie...Laurie, come on, time to wake up."

Laurie Strode's eyes popped open. Morning light was streaming in through her window. Her father was standing over her bed. "Come on, time to get going, or you'll be late," he informed her, gesturing towards her clock, which read 7:46. Laurie blinked at it. "You let me go that long?" she inquired.

"It's OK," he seemed reasonable about it, "Lord knows I sleep in sometimes too. I'm on my way out, so lock up when you go."

"Right," she nodded as he walked out. She switched off her record player, on which the brand new copy of Fleetwood Mac's Rumours she'd picked up a few weeks ago was still spinning after having lured her to sleep the previous night, and dressed as quickly as she could manage. She hated being tardy for anything, especially school, although given that she was a favorite among her teachers for being brighter than average, she supposed she had a little slack to work with if she did turn up late a single time.

She swept her school books off the table next to her phone, then bent down to pick up the book she'd been reading the last few days (Mystery in the Flooded Museum; mysteries had always been one of Laurie's favorite genres) that she hoped to finish in study hall. She hustled down the stairs. No time for a formal breakfast, so she simply snatched a Pop Tart out of the cabinet and started chewing away as she stepped out the door and locked it behind her.

A warm breeze permeated the morning air as she walked up the block as quickly as possible. Temperatures had been notably above average in Haddonfield the past week, although the weatherman had said last night that a cold front moving through overnight would cool things down towards what was normal at this time of year.

There came loud shouts as several younger children, about ten or eleven or so, cut across the sidewalk in front of her, apparently late for school themselves. Laurie smiled after them, glad to know that at least she wasn't alone. She always liked children, and part of her missed being one herself. It was hard to fathom that in just a few short months, she'd be going off to college and leaving the intimate world of Haddonfield behind (she'd narrowed down her choices to either Lake Forest, Purdue, or Wheaton, but knew it would still probably take some time before she made the final decision). By and large, she was happy with her life up till now-apart from the fact she was viewed by so many her age as an outsider for reading so much

and, as they seemed to see it, being perhaps too quiet and thoughtful for her own good. And yet, despite all the good she'd managed to accomplish, and all the warm relationships she did have, there was something in the depths of her subconscious bothering her. She didn't know what it was, something perhaps long suppressed, and for some reason, the last few days it had been getting stronger and stronger...

"Hey, over here," came the call from the corner. The familiar figures of Lynda van der Klok and Annie Brackett were leaning against an oak, looking rather impatient. "What took you so long?" the former asked as Laurie came up alongside them, "We've been waiting a good ten minutes."

"I slept in," Laurie protested.

"Now that's something I never thought I'd hear. Laurie Strode, all around teacher's pet, sleeping in a school day," Annie commented with a mixture of sarcasm and humor, "I'd've thought it more likely for Darth Vader to join the Rebellion than I'd live to see this happen."

"Hey cut me a break; I was studying for the geometry test," Laurie told her.

"You see, that's totally your whole problem, Laurie, you focus too much on the inconsequential things and miss out on all the fun," Lynda chided her, "While you were locked away reading like a madman, for instance, Bob and I had the most wonderful night imaginable."

"Again?" Laurie raised an eyebrow; increasingly it seemed her friend was having a little too much fun with her boyfriend.

"Totally," the blonde confirmed, "Speaking of that test, though, you sure you're not going to give me any of the answers?"

"I can't," Laurie shook her head emphatically, "You know that would be cheating as much as I do, and I can't cheat."

"Yeah, Lord knows you can't have a single blemish on your perfectly spotless record," Annie shrugged with definite sarcasm this time, "I just want to get that test over with, because there far too much to look forward to today to be dragged down by that."

\* \* \*

><p>8:57 a.m.<p>

Michael heard the sound of cars as he exited the woods. He had been walking all night and was starving (although he had snacked on an apparently rabid raccoon that had tried to attack him and had found the tables quickly turned). And as luck would have it, there happened to be a restaurant across the road next to a quaint old time train station. He pulled off his mask for the first time in recent memory-no need spooking people he would have nothing to do with-and leisurely strolled across the road, not caring about the cars that almost hit him in both directions until he'd made it all the way across. He took note of the road sign near the diner stating that Haddonfield was eighty miles to the west; he'd made good progress.

Now if he could only speed it up a tad more...

Michael pushed open the doors to the restaurant, which was sparsely crowded even though it was the height of breakfast rush hour. "Hello, welcome to J.C.'s Diner," an overly bubbly waitress greeted him. She eyed his tramp disguise with some distaste, but immediately perked back up and asked him, "Smoking or nonsmoking?"

Michael pointed at the nonsmoking section. The waitress led him to a booth. "I'll be with you in a moment," she told him, leaving him a menu. Michael stared at it, wondering how he would leave without paying, having never carried any cash since he had first been committed to Smith's Grove fifteen years prior to the present.

He was too busy concentrating on the menu to notice the bells on the door ringing as another customer came in. Nor did the cook calling out, "Morning, Sam," raise any alarms. There was no mistaking, however, the voice that responded, "Morning, Donald." Of all the restaurants in the state, he'd happened to choose the one Dr. Loomis ate at this particular morning-and his once and future foe was walking right toward his booth. Michael buried his face in the menu as the doctor plopped down in the booth next to his. "The usual, Sam?" the cook was apparently friends with Loomis, as he'd come out of the kitchen to greet him.

"Make it to go, Donald," Loomis told him with a weary tone, "I'm due at the courthouse in an hour to make the arrangements for the Myers trial."

"So they're finally bringing him up, huh?"

"The court's decision was that he would stand trial for his sister's murder when he turned twenty-one, Donald."

"That was just horrible; I mean, who'd've thought a little kid could do that?" the cook mused, "Well, maybe fifteen years mellowed him out."

"I wouldn't count on it," Loomis said gravely, "If anything Michael has become more agitated in the last few days; I've seen it in his movements and gestures. He's definitely waiting for something; I don't know what, but I intend to beat him at his game, whatever it is."

"Have you decided, sir?" the waitress had returned. Michael pointed quickly at the hash brown appetizers. He knew he had to get out of there before Loomis realized his patient was right in front of him, so if the meal didn't come in time, that was how it had to be.

"Don't you think you're getting a little paranoid, Sam?" behind him, the cook was skeptical of Loomis's analysis, "I mean, when the kid doesn't tell you anything for fifteen years, I'm sure it's natural to come to conclusions that..."

"Michael Myers is not your average killer," Loomis told him firmly, "There's something very dangerous going on inside his mind. I'm going to take every precaution to make sure he poses no threat to anyone in that courthouse for the duration of the trial, and so help me I'll make sure he spends the rest of his days in a maximum security

facility, where sitting and staring at the walls will be all he can do."

The cook shook his head. "Well, I think you're overreacting, but who am I to judge?" he shrugged, "Just try and relax a little, Sam; after all, Halloween's meant to be fun for everyone. I'll be right out with the usual."

He strolled back towards the kitchen. Loomis stretched his arms out, and in so doing whacked Michael in the back of the head. "Oh, sorry about that," he apologized, turning to face him. He frowned grimly. "You know, you look awfully familiar. Have we met before?"

Michael shook his head emphatically and buried it back in the menu. To his deep relief, Loomis simply shrugged and turned back to the newspaper he'd brought. The blaring of a train horn caught Michael's attention. He glanced out the diner's rear window to see a freight roaring down the track in the direction he knew Haddonfield was in. It was time to move before he was in fact discovered by Loomis. Seeing the waitress bringing his hash browns towards him already, he leaped towards her, grabbed them off the plate and wolfed them down in one bite, then raced for the door. "Sir, where are you going!?" she called after him furiously, "Sir, you'd better come back, you do have to pay for all this, sir! Sir!?"

Michael paid no heed. He barreled out the door and made a beeline for the approaching train. "Hey you, come back here and pay up, you cheapskate!" the cook was chasing after him now. Michael had too much of a head start, however. He leaped for the last car on the train and grabbed hold of its ladder as the train lumbered on down the tracks towards Haddonfield. leaving the cook well in the dust behind him. Safe, he climbed up to the roof of the car and watched from an increasingly safe distance as Loomis ran up behind the cook and called out, "What happened, Donald?"

"That tramp ran off without paying!" the cook gestured in contempt at the receding train, "He'll be halfway to Springfield by the time I get a report called in. God, I hate freeloaders; always stiffing me for a meal!"

He stormed back towards the restaurant. Loomis frowned and stared down the tracks, but eventually shrugged and trudged off as well-only to stop and glance after the train again, mumbling out loud, "Something just wasn't right now..."

### 3. He Came Home Again

11:12 a.m.

Michael lay on top of the last boxcar on the train, staring blankly at the sky. It had seemed so long ago-especially since he did most of his work at night-that he could enjoy the sun. Especially in the last few years before his first escape, Loomis had made sure he'd spent more and more time locked in his room at the sanitarium. Although Michael was now used to the night, he hadn't realized how much he missed the daylight hours. Once he finished with the business he had planned, he'd go somewhere where he could enjoy lots and lots of sunlight.

He noticed several familiar buildings. The train was now passing through Haddonfield. Michael rose up and leaped off into a ditch. Dusting himself off, he climbed out and surveyed the town before him past the Haddonfield railroad station. It looked just as he'd remembered it from so long ago. All the cars and clothing styles of the people out and about in the late morning hour now in hindsight screamed 1978 (indeed, he took note of the movie theater on the corner touting, COMING SOON, SUPERMAN THE MOVIE: YOU'LL BELIEVE A MAN CAN FLY). He noticed the clock atop the bank across from the railroad station: 11:15 in the morning exactly. Henceforth, it would be critical to remember what he'd been doing during October 30, 1978 at any given time (at quarter after eleven that day, for instance, he recalled he'd been brooding and planning on how to force all the other inmates out onto the lawn once night had fallen). His past self would break out in exactly nine hours from now; he'd need all that time to set up what he had planned for Her and the others.

He started trudging up High Street, ignoring the strong glances of disdain from several passersby. While he wanted to get to the Myers house quickly, he had something else to take care of first...

\* \* \*

><p>11:27 a.m.<p>

Laurie finished the geometry test and put her pencil down. It had seemed easier than she'd thought, perhaps because she'd studied for it all afternoon yesterday. She put her head down, waiting for the bell, which she predicted would come in no more than two or three minutes. The frantic scraping of pencils around the classroom hinted the majority of her classmates were having a harder time with it than she had.

By now she was starting to get hungry; that light breakfast seemed almost a whole day away. Fortunately, lunch was next on her schedule, and it was in fact now that the bell did ring, like a siren in the night. With loud groans, the other students passed in their likely less than perfect tests and started gathering up their belongings. Feeling more confident than they about her results on the quiz, Laurie headed for the door...

Only to be abruptly tripped from behind the moment she was in the hall, sending her toppling to the ground and her books spilling everywhere. "Whoops, have a nice trip, Strobe?" snickered an all-too-familiar voice behind her. Laurie gritted her teeth in frustration. She didn't believe in holding grudges, but if there was one person she disliked above everyone else, it was conceited, popular, pretty Janet Walden, who treated every girl not in her clique with more or less utter disdain. "Did you really need to do that, Janet?" she mumbled as calmly as she could manage.

"Hey, no hard feelings; let me help with some of those-whoops again," Janet instead kicked Laurie's books out of her grasp, prompting sycophantic laughter from her entourage behind her-laughter that quickly dissipated as they noticed the principal casually strolling up the hall towards them, not noticing anything yet. Nonetheless, the popular girls quickly scattered in the other direction. Rolling her eyes, Laurie crawled over to where her books had landed and started picking them up...

...and was soon aided by a familiar set of hands. "More Janet trouble, I presume?" Lynda asked her knowingly, bending down to pick up a few titles.

"Unfortunately," Laurie nodded, taking the other books back from the blonde, "What's it going to take for her to start seeing me and everyone in this school as more than just a caricature?"

"Who knows?" Lynda shrugged, "Well, I don't know about you, but I'm totally starved, so let's go eat."

"Agreed," Laurie followed her friend towards the cafeteria at the end of the hall; hopefully a good lunch would get her mind off her social problems. The cafeteria was already packed when they slipped through the doors. The line moved fast enough for them to have their lunches all delivered in a little under five minutes. The two of them quickly located Annie at the end of the table against the far wall. "I swear, if they make this food any worse, we'll all be keeling over dead soon," the other brunette vented as they sat down, gesturing at her tray, "How do they expect us to eat any of this?"

"I don't think it's that bad," Laurie countered, taking a bite of macaroni from her own tray.

"That's half the problem with you right there, Laurie; you never challenge convention or authority on anything," Annie shook her head.

"Problem? I really don't think it's a problem, Annie," her attention was momentarily diverted by several popular boys entering the cafeteria at the moment. If only they cared that she existed...

"And another thing; what do they expect us to get out of this?" Annie continued venting, holding up a piece of chemistry homework that had been graded a D+, "Most of us don't have a clue what the melting point of molecules is, and we all could care less, so why do they bother with quizzing us on this?"

"I see you're totally in a mood today," Lynda noted.

"How incredibly observant of you, Lynda; yes, I am, because on top of all this, Paul told me after second period he had to cancel for this afternoon; something that came up last night he had to take care of after school," Annie sighed in frustration, "I swear I can't understand boys half the time, so in a way, maybe it's a good thing you're not dating, Laurie, or you'd...Laurie? Hello, are you in there?"

Laurie's attention had been diverted again. She'd been glancing towards the window-and had seen, to her surprise, a homeless man right outside, staring inside-staring right at her. Or was he? "What's he doing?" she mused out loud.

"Who?" Lynda turned to follow her gaze.

"That homeless man, looks like he's..." Laurie had turned away briefly when her friend had spoken, and found the homeless man had completely vanished from the window when she looked back. "That's strange, how'd he disappear so quickly?" she frowned.



"Assuming he was there in the first place," Annie was dismissive, "Knowing how you study till the crack of dawn for everything..."

"He looked pretty real, Annie; I swear he was there, looking in at us," Laurie glanced back out at the now deserted street. Had it all been in her mind?

\* \* \*

><p>Michael waited a few moments before sliding back to the window and looking back in. Yes, it was her, as young and lovely as he had once remembered her being on that fateful day and evening. He pressed his face almost up against the glass, watching her return her attention to her lunch...<p>

"Hey, you," came the abrupt shout from behind Michael, making him jump slightly in surprise. He turned to see Sheriff Lee Brackett leaning out the window of his cruiser, which had pulled up behind him without warning. "Yeah, you," the sheriff continued, frowning, "Come over here."

Michael wearily trudged away from the window as Sheriff Brackett climbed out of his cruiser and stormed over. "What do you think you're doing?" he demanded, "Haddonfield High is not a place for anyone to be spying. We'd all like our children to have some privacy while they learn; I certainly do myself. Who are you, anyway?" he glanced at Michael from head to toe, "I've never seen you in this town before. Passing through, are you?"

Michael quickly nodded. "All right, I'll let you off with a warning this time, but don't let me catch you hanging around here like this again, or I'll run you in for trespassing," the sheriff admonished him, "Move along, now."

He waved Michael up the block before climbing back into his cruiser and driving off. Michael shot a contemptuous backwards glare at the retreating police car. Even though Brackett had hardly done anything to hinder him on that fateful night, he disliked the man anyway. Oh well, he thought to himself, the man was still going to lose his daughter by the time Halloween was through, and go into the downward spiral that her death had indeed put him through in the unaltered timeline.

He kept trudging down the streets of Haddonfield, ignoring the disapproving glares of people he passed, until he reached the Myers house. He stood before it reverently for a moment before quickly slipping inside, knowing with relief that his tramp disguise worked well under the circumstances; anyone who did see him inside would just assume he was a transient looking for a roof over his head for the night, especially with the rain that was coming later in the evening. He inhaled deeply, soaking in the memories of the house, both those that had already happened here at this particular point in time, and those that would happen here over the years to come. One other memory, though, was strongest of all at the moment...

Dr. Clugg, Michael had discovered, had more in common with him than he'd thought when they'd first met, for, as the insane magician had related to him in the asylum, his family had owned the Myers house three generations ago. His great-grandfather had been an insane surgeon (madness apparently ran in the Clugg family) who, it had been

said, operated a secret torture chamber somewhere inside the house. As the years had gone by, though, most people had dismissed that as an urban legend.

Michael, however, knew the urban legend was true. When he'd been four, he'd been wandering around the house and, after crawling into a closet, had accidentally triggered a secret entrance and fallen through the door and down a set of stairs into a tunnel. Fascinated, he'd followed it to the end and discovered the torture chamber, which had completely fascinated him. For a minute, anyway, before Judith had swooped down, dragged him back upstairs, nailed the door shut, and vehemently made him swear never to go looking for it again, little suspecting that in doing so she was helping to plant the seeds of her own demise. The first time out of the asylum, he'd been too excited at simply being out and able to wield a knife again to bother looking for the chamber. Now, it was finally time to do so. However, his memory after all these years wasn't exactly the best, and he forgot which closet it had been in.

He stepped into the nearest one and tapped at all the walls. No hollowness was apparent at all. Undaunted, he strode a few feet down the hall into the next one. This time, there was a hollow sound when he tapped the far wall. Michael stepped back and gave it a hard kick. The wall immediately collapsed from years of rot. The stairway down into the chamber was visible on the other side. Michael followed it down to the bottom-about seventy feet down or so-and up a tunnel that didn't seem quite as long as he'd remembered. Finally, he bumped into the heavy iron door to the chamber. Slipping inside, he groped around for the old time light switch he'd remembered being on the wall and threw it when he found it. A low hum coincided with the flickering of ancient lights all around the former torture chamber. They emitted only the weakest of light, but Michael preferred it that way for his purposes.

He stepped into the middle of the chamber and took it in. Everything appeared to be the way it had been left so long ago when the authorities had dragged Dr. Clugg's great-grandfather off to the nuthouse, little knowing what had lain under the house. Decomposing skeletons still hung in shackles on the wall. Ominous surgical equipment was stacked next to empty cages all around the room. And a thick layer of dust and cobwebs covered everything-in short, Michael couldn't have asked for a more terrifying environment for his plan.

He strolled over to one of the most notable features in the room: an early electric chair. He examined it closely: the leather straps were starting to wear out, and he'd need something with far more power than the ancient and likely no longer functional generator currently hooked up to it, but those replacements could be easily obtained. He then walked to the center of the room and examined the operating table there. Its straps also needed replacing, but otherwise it was what he needed; already he could just imagine Her strapped down to it, his complete prisoner. No other imminent implements of death were readily available in the chamber, so he'd have to pick them up later. Lastly, he took note of the door. It looked quite heavy and could probably withstand an effort from outside to break in once closed and locked. And better, the iron locking bars still looked in prime condition. No one was coming into the chamber later on that he didn't want coming in.

He returned to the middle of the chamber and admired his new domain. His next goal in his master plan would be to find Dr. Clugg and get some of the items he needed off of him-whether the not so good doctor wanted to share them or not...

#### 4. Shapes that Can Vanish

3:13 p.m.

Laurie placed several books back in the school library's 500 section from the cart in front of her. She was almost done for the day by now, with only five more books left to put away. She'd become a library aide in her sophomore year, and had always gone about it with a sense of enthusiasm, much to the delight of the librarian, who was normally understaffed.

For some reason she didn't understand, the homeless man she'd noticed at lunch had been nagging at her all day. Even though he'd disappeared after she'd first noticed him and hadn't come back, there had been something unnerving about him that she couldn't quite figure out.

Placing the last books on the shelf at the very end of the row, she wheeled the cart back to the front desk. "All done, Mrs. Talbot," she announced to the librarian, an elderly woman with graying hair.

"Thank you Laurie," the librarian smiled approvingly, "We should have several new titles in after Halloween for you to catalogue. You know, it's going to be so hard next year without you around to help out."

"Well, I know you'll manage somehow," Laurie gathered up her school supplies and jacket, "Have a good afternoon, Mrs. Talbot."

As school had ended a half hour ago, the hallways of Haddonfield High were mostly deserted as she left the library and hustled down the hall towards the front door. There were a few sounds from several classrooms along the hall-the sounds of teachers grading papers, or several school groups holding formal meetings-but otherwise the building was rather quiet. Outside, it seemed warmer than ever; at least the upper sixties, Laurie figured, throwing her jacket over her shoulder. Already, though, she could make out some darker clouds streaming in over the western horizon, likely heralding the storm they'd been calling for the last few days for that evening.

These, however, weren't the only thing she saw at the moment. Standing right across the street, staring at her, was the homeless man-or so Laurie thought, for she blinked for the briefest of moments and he was gone. She frowned; had her mind played a trick on her just now? She glanced up the street in both directions, but there was no sign of him-or any other pedestrians for that matter. Shrugging, she started walking off towards home.

There came the honking of a horn by the curb nearby. Laurie looked up, but they weren't honking at her. It was Janet, and she was parked in front of Ben Tramer's house. Laurie's heart almost skipped a beat when he came out the front door, and was compelled to scramble out of sight behind a hedge. If only she could just get up the nerve to talk

to him, she rued, she would feel infinitely better about her life. At the moment, however, she didn't have the courage, and could only watch with more than a slight feeling of jealousy as he climbed in with Janet and the two of them drove off together. She shook her head softly. Someday, maybe someday...

Then she saw the homeless man again. This time he was leaning out of an alley directly ahead of her, looking right in her direction. He immediately slid back out of sight once it was clear she was staring right back at him. On a whim, Laurie ran towards the alley-only to find it completely deserted when she arrived. And furthermore, she could see no way he could have gotten out of it that quickly. She was now quite confused-and worried.

She started walking more quickly up the street. The wind was now starting to pick up, and that only added to the strange sense of foreboding Laurie was feeling. Every block, she stopped and looked back to make sure the homeless man wasn't following her. There was no sign of him behind her, but somehow she felt he was still there...

It wasn't until she reached the safety of her house that she breathed a sigh of relief. Double-locking the door behind her-something she ordinarily didn't do-she barely had time to collect herself before the phone rang. "Yes?" she asked after picking it up.

"Laurie, it's Mrs. Doyle," came the familiar voice, "Would you be open for tomorrow night till about midnight?"

"Um, I think I can," Laurie told her. She had taken to babysitting for extra money, and as it was, the Doyles' son Tommy was one of her favorite "customers." "What time would you need me for?"

"Seven, if you can make it."

"Seven would be fine, Mrs. Doyle. I'll see you then," she nodded as she hung up. Every little bit helped towards college, she figured. She turned away from the phone...

...and let out a loud shriek. For the homeless man was right outside the window, practically right against the glass, staring right at her. Almost instinctually, Laurie dashed to the fireplace and grabbed a poker; if he meant to come in, she was going to go down fighting. When she turned back, however, he was gone again. Very hesitantly, she approached the window and glanced around outside. No sign of him at all. A quick check of the other windows confirmed he had completely vanished without a trace-if, of course, he'd really been there at all in the first place. She put both hands to her face. Was she starting to hallucinate? If so, what was the significance of the homeless man...?

She was so much on edge that she cried out yet again when the phone unexpectedly rang a second time. She almost dropped the receiver to the floor in her anxiety. "What!?" she half-shouted once she'd gotten a better grip on it.

"So what's the matter with you?" it was Annie.

"Oh, uh, nothing, it's...nothing really," Laurie said, relieved, "You, uh, just caught me by surprise there."

"Well once you get back to normal, or what passes for normal for you, how would you feel about coming over for the evening?" Annie inquired, "I could really use some help on that literature paper for tomorrow."

Laurie weighed her options. Her gut told her she'd appreciate company at the moment. "Uh, sure, sure, I'd love to," she agreed, picking up the entire phone and carrying it over to the window for another look outside. Again, no one was visible...now. "Say, uh, Annie, are you there now?"

"No, I'm calling from the phone booth at the corner of Birch and Locust; my mom made me go pay the electric bill for her, even though I don't see how she couldn't have found the time herself. Why?"

"Oh...nothing," Laurie said softly, "Um, if you are out and about, how you drop by here when we're done, and we'll walk over together, then?"

"Are you all right, Laurie? You sound like you've seen a ghost or something."

"No. No, I...it's just, I thought I saw someone following me on the way home, and I'd just feel a little better if we went together, if that's OK."

"So you've finally got a secret admirer, huh, Laurie?" Annie kidded her.

"I'm serious, Annie, I got a bad vibe off this man...!"

"OK, OK, just relax. Sure, I'll come on by if you'd feel more comfortable with a chaperone. I'll go by Lynda's when I'm done here and get her now too if she'd make you feel safer too."

"Yeah, I'd appreciate that; safety in numbers," Laurie nodded softly, "I'll be ready when you get here."

"I'll be there in ten minutes, so hold it together till then," Annie informed her as she hung up. Laurie hustled to the door, unlocked it, and cautiously stuck her head out. Still no sign of the homeless man. And yet, she could feel his presence somehow. She hoped he wouldn't try following her again-if he was real...

\* \* \*

><p>Michael, however, had no further intention of pursuing her at the moment. He'd verified her base location, and that was all he needed right now. As he lumbered down the street away from the Strode house, his thoughts were on getting transportation to Dr. Clugg's performance that evening. He'd seen from several promotional flyers attached to telephone poles around Haddonfield that it started at seven at the Ambridge Town Hall, meaning he still had several hours. Michael, however, knew he had to find just the right vehicle, one that could carry everything he needed and not look out of place doing it, and thus far such a vehicle had been hard to find.<p>

He was so lost in thought that he jumped in surprise when a

bizarre-looking man in a loud plaid tuxedo leaped out in front of him. "Hiya pal!" he proclaimed, giving Michael's hand a vigorous pumping, "Chet Vett's the name, and I've got the deal of a lifetime for you, my friend. Follow me, and I'll show you how my new improved Stain-Off products can get the toughest messes clean, something somebody like you who lives among dirt can appreciate. Come on, don't be shy now."

He dragged Michael towards his van parked nearby, which had his name and the byline PROFESSIONAL SALESMAN AT LARGE written on the side in large balloon letters. "Now you're probably asking yourself, will this be a waste of my time?" Vett droned on, not even giving Michael the benefit of a glance as he pulled him into the back of the van, "Well my friend, let me give you a demonstration here to show you that Stain-Off really works. Let's take that cap of yours for example," he snatched it off Michael's head, "Suppose something like this was to happen," he dumped several bottles of ink and spaghetti sauce all over it. "Ouch, that's not pretty! But watch how new improved Stain-Off can tackle even a tough job like this. We'll just throw it in this jar of water, throw in a little Stain-Off, and watch what happens when we mix it up real good."

Michael wasn't watching. He was examining the interior of the van itself. It was more than large enough to transport the items he needed. True, it wasn't exactly what he wanted to be caught driving around in, but it would have to do. His gaze fell on a length of cord lying on the floor...

"\_Voila\_! Good as new!" Vett held up the cap, which was far from clean, "Or close enough. Now I can tell you don't have that much money on you, stranger, but I can offer you a gallon of Stain-Off for the low, low price of a hundred and fifty dollars. Whatdya say?"

Michael answered by shoving the van's door shut and wrapping the cord around Vett's neck. "Help! Police!" Vett gasped, thrashing about like a fish that had been caught. He kicked over his jars of Stain-Off in a panic before finally collapsing dead to the floor. Michael stared down at the salesman's body. For once, it appeared he'd done the world a favor by killing someone.

He rifled through Vett's pocket for his keys and climbed into the van's driver's seat. A low rumble of thunder echoed in the distance as he pulled out into traffic, his next destination Ambridge and Dr. Clugg...

## 5. Magical Michael

5:31 p.m.

On another lonely stretch of Illinois road, the same light phenomena that had heralded Michael's arrival through time lit up the heavens again. Out of it, a solitary figure hurtled to the ground. Hitting the grass hard, he looked around and cursed his luck; his physical 1978 destination had somehow deviated from what he'd entered in the computer back in the future. After all these years, technology still tended to fail at critical moments. But that was no further concern to him. He needed to get to Haddonfield as quickly as possible; given the head start Michael had, there was no telling how far along in his

plans he was.

Fortunately, a tractor trailer was coming up the road towards him. He hobbled out into the middle of the road and waved it down. "What's the story, mac?" the driver leaned out the window once he'd braked to a stop.

"Are you heading to Haddonfield?" he asked, "I need a ride there A.S.A.P."

"Nope, I'm going to Alton," the driver said.

"Close enough," he opened the passenger side door and climbed up into the cab, "I'll catch another ride there."

"Good Lord," the driver was staring at him in shock, "What happened to you, buddy?"

"I'm forbidden to tell you that," he gestured for the driver to start going again, "All I can say is that it's something that could have been avoided if I'd thought things out better at one point or another."

It was his turn to stare at the driver. He knew of this man; he would have been one of Michael's victims shortly after his second escape ten years from now, a murder that had left the man's wife and children destitute. If his plan, unknown to the people who'd sent him back in time, worked, he could spare the man's family the agony of losing him. All he'd have to do was find Michael. And recruit the right help, difficult though that would be given the circumstances...

With a loud crash of thunder, the heavens opened up. "Woo boy," the driver exclaimed, switching on the windshield wipers, "I knew they were calling for wet stuff, but I didn't expect it this heavy. Maybe some big force knows it's going to be Halloween or something."

"You may be right," his passenger nodded grimly. He glanced at his watch. Two and a half hours before Michael would first break out of Smith's Grove. The clock was ticking for everyone...

\* \* \*

><p>6:41 p.m.<p>

The Michael of the future was also trying to memorize his past movements as he backed into a space behind the Ambridge Town Hall. He really wanted to be out of Ambridge no later than eight so he could pick up some loose ends back in Haddonfield for his plan tomorrow night, and be all done by the time his past self arrived home for the first time.

He took a quick glance to the back of the van, where Vett's body was safely locked in a trunk formerly filled with his Stain-Off bottles. Still, Michael wished to be in and as quickly as possible; parking where he was parking now carried the great risk of alerting the police something might not be kosher with the vehicle. Nevertheless, he left the engine running as he climbed out and trudged around to the front of the building. Throngs of people, many of them happy families, having been duped by Dr. Clugg's posters into thinking his

show was family friendly, were streaming in the front door. "Three dollars admission," a man in a vampire outfit at the door told Michael when he tried to simply walk in, frowning at his tramp disguise. Michael pulled the money out of Vett's wallet, which he'd filched just in case, and handed it over. Although there were plenty of seats still available inside, he leaned against the back wall instead of sitting down. His plan was to sneak backstage once the show started, and that would work best if his departure wasn't apparent to other people.

The minutes stretched on towards show time. No one else seemed to notice Michael, even though his homeless man guise was out of place among the affluent middle class families sitting down to wait for the show to begin. Finally, at seven o'clock exactly, the lights dimmed. "Ladies and gentlemen, boy and girls," came a low, hissing voice over the microphone that Michael knew belonged to Dr. Clugg's hunchbacked assistant Klaus, "give a warm welcome to the master of the macabre, that great illusionist himself, Dr. Thaddeus Clugg."

Michael forced himself to clap laconically as loud, scary music heralded Dr. Clugg's arrival on stage, wearing his usual stage makeup that made him look like a rotting corpse. "Good evening, ladies and gentlemen," he hissed ominously at the audience, "Tonight, for your viewing pleasure, we will examine the very essence of life and death, as is fitting for Halloween. As such, you will experience such sights as THIS!"

He made a burst of flames rise from his hand, and when it died down, a skull that Michael knew was real rested in the doctor's palm. Clugg then nonchalantly hurled it into the front row, prompting numerous terrified screams. "Klaus!" he called out.

"Yes, Dr, Clugg," Klaus ambled on stage, causing more screams at his hideous appearance.

"Prepare the manacles," Dr. Clugg ordered him, "The first illusion tonight will be a most terrifying one-an escape from a coffin filled with live cobras."

"Yes Dr. Clugg. Bring forth the shackles and the snakes!" Klaus shouted to the wings. Several additional members of Clugg's staff, all wearing black robes with the hoods up, trudged solemnly on stage, carrying a coffin, chains, and several jars from which angry hissing could be heard even from the back row. Several families immediately got up and left, none of them noticing Michael slipping through the door that led backstage.

He waited quietly behind a group of flats and watched the men set up the snake coffin trick for Dr. Clugg. As luck would have it, one of them ambled off stage once everything was in place and started rooting around in his robe for something, possibly a cigarette. Michael ever so carefully shoved over a nearby stack of boxes to get the man's attention. "Hey, what's going on over here?" he took the bait and sauntered over. In a flash, Michael drew his knife and drove it home. The man's low scream was easily drowned out by the loud music on stage. Michael dragged him behind the flats and quickly put the man's robe over his tramp disguise. No one had apparently noticed the brief disappearance of his victim, so he easily slipped into place at the edge of the stage just as Dr. Clugg had been completely nailed into the coffin. "The curtains, please," Klaus ordered the



rest of the assistants.

"Hey Otto, come on, that means you too!" one of the hooded men yelled at Michael, standing quite separately from the rest of them, as they strode as a group towards the set of curtains on wheels at the back of the stage. Keeping his head low, Michael rushed over and helped them push the curtains around the coffin. He knew how the trick worked: ordinarily, the screws in the head of the coffin were too short, and thus Dr. Clugg could easily push it open once the curtains were in place and slide out. In the future, when he had killed some of his victims in this manner, he'd simply added the normal, longer screws back into place, which was what Michael was considering doing himself once he gained possession of the coffin-if it would turn out he needed it in the end.

Although he knew it had taken Clugg mere seconds to escape the coffin, the deranged magician kept the audience sweating for close to four and a half minutes before stepping triumphantly through the curtains to loud applause. "Thank you," he told them without a drop of sincerity, "And now, for my next illusion, I will need a volunteer from the audience."

Michael paid no attention as he and the rest of the assistants carried the coffin and its sawhorses off stage. He'd memorized Clugg's schedule to the T, and the time to make his move was now.

Once everything had been deposited backstage, he hung around and waited till he was alone. Then he made a beeline for the prop section, and more specifically, the case containing Dr. Clugg's personal collection of restraints. He opened it up and lovingly examined the collection of handcuffs, leg irons, and heavy leather straps, among others. Then he closed it up, grabbed several straitjackets off a nearby pile, and hustled for the back door. Outside, he opened the van's rear doors and tossed the case and straitjackets inside. He returned in time to note Dr. Clugg placing a young woman inside a guillotine. While this guillotine happened to be a fake, Michael recalled that Clugg did occasionally, when not performing, kill his victims with a real one-and that indeed, he'd been exposed and arrested after the real one had been set up on stage by accident about five years from now. Had it been available for the taking at the moment, Michael would have left with it, but he couldn't see it anywhere.

What was available, however, was a large vertical rack of spikes right behind the curtain. Michael walked over and examined it thoroughly. All the spikes were real and very sharp; when Clugg was locked underneath them during his act, Michael knew, only the fact his restraints were usually attached to the table with Velcro allowed him to slide safely off the table in time before they'd fall on him. But if he simply replaced the decaying straps on the operating table in the torture chamber...

Nodding, he glanced around to make sure no one was watching, then wheeled the spike rack out the back door and into the back of the van. On his next trip, he hefted and carried out the coffin, by now cleansed of the snakes, and a fistful of the longer screws from the toolbox nearby. Finally, his attention fell on Dr. Clugg's water torture cell in the corner. Again, Michael had learned how it worked: Klaus would normally remove the bolts while locking his master

inside, allowing Clugg to easily swing up and get all the air he needed once the curtains were in place. All he'd have to do was leave the bolts firmly in place for his victim. And the water torture cell had a handy automatic filling valve at the bottom, a special innovation by Clugg that would allow it to fill up quickly for a performance. All he'd have to do, Michael realized, was turn it on when he was ready, and his victim would quickly be under water. He started to wheel the water torture cell out the door...

"Hey Otto, Klaus says you're supposed to get the spiders ready for the..." one of the hooded assistants grabbed his shoulder just as he was out the door and turned him around, "Hey, wait a minute, you're not Otto! Where's Otto?"

Cornered, Michael stabbed this man as well. This time, with no music on stage, his scream was heard by all, and added to by a loud crash of thunder outside, making many members in the audience scream in fright as well. On stage, Dr. Clugg stopped in the middle of swallowing a sword and glanced towards the wings. "Well, it appears perhaps the spirits of the dead may just be with us ahead of schedule tonight," he said grimly to the audience. Covering the microphone, he gestured Klaus over and muttered softly in the hunchback's ear, "Find out what the hell's going on back there; they're ruining the act here!"

"Yes, Dr. Clugg," Klaus ambled offstage and towards the open back door. "Where do you think you're going with that!" he shouted, seeing Michael loading the water torture cell into the back of the van outside, "The show's not over yet! We need that for...!"

Then his gaze fell on the newest dead assistant at his feet. "Hey, what...you...hold it right there, you!" he shouted at Michael, charging straight towards him. Michael slammed the van's back doors shut and ran hard for the front door. Klaus, however, caught up to him and seized him around the chest. "You're not going anywhere, my friend, whoever you are!" he bellowed, trying to wrestle Michael to the ground, "You've got a lot of explaining to do, buster!"

Unable to go for the knife, Michael pushed Klaus up off him and kicked the hunchback in the face. He dove headfirst into the van, shifted into drive, and peeled back towards the highway, not bothering to shut the door behind himself. The van disappeared into the rain just as Dr. Clugg barreled out of the building. "What happened!?" he demanded to his chief assistant, jerking Klaus back to his feet, "Who was that, and why did he kill Bonar? And how many of my things did he take?"

"I don't know, Dr. Clugg," Klaus shook his head, "But I did memorize his license plate, so we should find him very easily after the show."

"Good," Clugg nodded, "Because if he finds out what he's got, we could be in deep, deep trouble with the police. So let's go back in and finish the show so no one gets suspicious, then go on the hunt as soon as possible."

\* \* \*

><p>As he finally pulled the van's driver's side door closed as he roared out of Ambridge at double the speed limit, Michael was

thinking about Clugg as well. He knew it would be best to ditch the van once he got everything loaded into the torture chamber back at the Myers house; Clugg always had been a harsh man with anyone who crossed him, and stealing the man's prize possessions was guaranteed to bring down his wrath.<p>

He hunched over the steering wheel and stared blankly ahead at the road unfolding before him in his headlights. There was still one more thing he needed before he returned to Haddonfield, and fortunately, there was a power substation just off the highway about halfway back to town where he could get it...

## 6. Several Blocks of Terror

8:21 p.m.

"...this breaking news bulletin just in, the entire eastern half of Hardin County has suffered a mysterious blackout," Annie's radio crackled, "At least thirteen towns in a thirty mile radius have gone completely dark at this hour. Crews are now en route to the Bainbridge Power Substation, which controls the communities in question, but there is no word on when the power will be back on, or what caused the blackout..."

"Well what do you expect, dummy; it's a thunderstorm; the power station took a direct hit, obviously," Lynda commented sarcastically at the radio from the chair next to it, "Pass me another one, Annie," she directed her friend, sprawled casually out on her bed nearby.

"My mother's going to know we've been drinking up here if you keep downing them, Lynda," Annie warned her, but nonetheless produced a can of beer from underneath the bed and tossed it to the blonde. A loud crash of thunder sounded outside, making Laurie jump a little from her position on the floor. Ordinarily she wasn't scared of thunder, but something just didn't seem quite right tonight. She took a quick glance out the window. Visibility up the street was severely limited each way thanks to the sheets of rain pounding against the window, but no one seemed to be outside the Bracketts' house at the moment. That didn't completely put her at ease, though. Ordinarily she'd have given her parents a call to come pick her up under the circumstances, but tonight, as they'd announced to her yesterday, they were at the movies together, and the film wouldn't be over for at least another hour. She would eventually have to take her chances and brave the streets of Haddonfield, and hope nothing would happen...

"OK, last question," she announced, turning back to her literature book, "What is the symbolism of Tess laying down on Stonehenge's altar?"

"Yeah Paul, we're almost done, maybe later tonight at your place if I can find a good enough reason," Annie wasn't paying the least bit of attention, having been on the phone with her boyfriend for the last ten minutes-which Laurie considered quite risky given there was a thunderstorm going on outside. "Anyone, anyone with an answer?" she asked out loud.

"How am I supposed to know?" Lynda lit up a cigarette; she hadn't

even looked at her own book all night, basically having tried to copy off Laurie despite her friend's best efforts to prevent such cheating, "I lost track of what they expect us to get out of this a long time ago," the blonde continued, taking a long puff.

"Well, for one thing, I find Tess's fate a good example of how too much pressure from society can force us into being something we'd rather not," Laurie argued, "Now come on, I've given you all the help I can with this; what's the symbolism?"

"I'm with Lynda on this, Laurie; I don't have a clue, and I don't really care," Annie turned briefly away from the phone, then returned to Paul. Laurie sighed deeply. "Come on, this is important you guys," she told them firmly, "You're going to need a good grade with this to get into college; believe me, I've seen the entry forms."

"And then do what when we get there?" Lynda posed, taking another swig of liquor. By now she'd finished off three cans and was starting to look somewhat tipsy from the fourth, "I mean, they don't teach you anything in college anyway. At least not in the classrooms. I met Sherry Langen's sister last week, and she's enjoying the extracurricular activities at Lake Forest, if you know what I mean. But you wouldn't, Laurie, being a virgin and all that. So what did you put down for the answer?"

She leaned over her friend's shoulder to see what she'd written. Laurie had had it. She slammed the book shut on the paper. "I give up," she announced, throwing her arms up in surrender, "I've been trying to do this the right way with the two of you for two hours, and neither of you are willing to try on your own. Go ahead and fail if you want, but I won't be used as a tool to help you graduate when you don't show any interest, when you only appreciate me as a tool..."

Without waiting for an answer, she rose up and slid her head against the window in a combination of disappointment and frustration. Her eyes stayed glued to the street outside-still deserted-even after there was a low clatter as the phone was dropped to the floor and her friends' reflections joined hers in the glass. "Come on Laurie, we don't just think of you as a tool," Annie told her with an apologetic tone, "We really do appreciate your company, don't we Lynda?"

"Oh yeah, totally," Lynda nodded rather sloppily from the alcohol.

"Well sometimes it just seems that way," Laurie told them softly without turning around, "I really appreciate having you two around too, but sometimes I just get the feeling that...well...you just don't..."

"Of course we do," Annie put an arm around her shoulder, "We'd do anything for you, Laurie, anything at all. And we really are going to miss you next year."

"Totally," Lynda agreed. Laurie managed a small smile. "Thanks," she said softly, "I don't mean to shout or get upset, it's just...you know how important school work is to me. I just, I just guess I wish more people could think the same way."

"That's totally you all right," Lynda told her, "Well, with luck

someday you'll find that person. Maybe."

For a few minutes, the three of them just stood there staring out into the stormy darkness, only briefly illuminated by lightning for a few seconds. Finally Laurie glanced at her watch. "Well, I'd better get going," she announced, bending down to get her purse and books, "My parents don't like me out later than nine on a school night. Now remember, though, this is an important paper, so at least try and give this some effort after I leave; I care for you guys too, and I don't want to see you left behind at graduation."

"Whatever," Lynda had already returned to the teen gossip magazine she'd brought. "Hey, John Travolta loves flying planes. That means he and I could get high up high."

Laurie shook her head. Apparently it would only take a fairly seismic event to make them take school seriously. She walked downstairs and fished her umbrella out of the vestibule. "Leaving already, Laurie?" Mrs. Brackett called from the kitchen, where she was busy pouring brownie batter into several baking pans.

"Yeah, my parents don't like me out late on a school night. Uh, Mrs. Brackett, would it be OK if you gave me a ride home tonight? I mean, with the weather what it is..."

"I'd love to, Laurie, but I'm afraid my car's at Irwin's Garage tonight; left it there overnight for its annual inspection tomorrow," Mrs. Brackett shook her head, "It should be out tomorrow afternoon, but I'm afraid you'll have to walk home tonight."

"Oh, OK. Well, thank you anyway, Mrs. Brackett. Have a good night," Laurie took a deep breath and stepped outside into the maelstrom. The rain pounded down almost horizontally, forcing Laurie to hold her umbrella sideways to keep at least somewhat dry. The weatherman hadn't been kidding when he'd said it would be a strong cold front moving in. But at least she'd be home in less than ten minutes even without a ride.

No sooner had she gone more than twenty steps, however, then all the lights on the block abruptly went out with a loud zap, plunging Haddonfield into pitch darkness. Laurie lurched to a stop and glanced in both directions. First the eastern half of the county, now Haddonfield itself. Was something going on here?

Of course not, she shook her head firmly; that was ridiculous. It was probably a tree on a power line somewhere. The electric company would have it back up in no time. She continued walking, albeit more slowly given that she could only see a few feet in front of her. From all over town the honking of horns from irate drivers stranded in traffic filled the air. Laurie hustled across Chestnut Street in front of her as fast as she could; no point in risking being hit by a wayward car that might try and take a shortcut around the inevitable jams.

There came an abrupt crunching sound not more than five yards behind her, much like someone had scraped the curb stepping up onto the sidewalk behind her. She turned, but the street was completely empty from what she could make out through the darkness and rain. Her heart started pounding. If the homeless man was still out there, now would be the perfect opportunity for him to strike...

She increased her pace again, not bothering to look back now. The rain picked up even more, pounding down in her hair until she had to stop to wring it dry. She looked up to try to get her bearings, and saw the Myers house looming in the night before her on the left. Her father had just sold it and had requested her assistance in laying out the key for the new owner tomorrow. Somehow, though, as she stared up at it through the night, she couldn't help but feel as if the house was alive, and that it was staring back at her, glancing right into her soul through its empty windows...

A rustling sound from a nearby bush made her jump again. She swung her umbrella wildly in the darkness-until she could hear some low voices mumbling over the pounding rain. Children's voices. "...fifteen years ago tomorrow night," a boy was saying with deliberately ominous tones, "He came home from trick or treating, went inside, got a REEEEEALLY big knife, crept upstairs, and stabbed the living hell out of her."

"W-W-Why would he do that, Ritchie?" gulped another boy. Laurie slowly crept forward to see the two of them crouched behind the bush, trying to shield themselves from the deluge as they watched the Myers house intently, unaware of her presence.

"No one knows," Ritchie grinned somewhat evilly; he was clearly relishing telling such a sordid tale, "When the cops showed up, he was just standing there on the curb, holding the bloody knife in his hand, kind of like...THIS!"

He lunged forward with a loud cry, making the other boy scream. "Please don't do that!" he protested. Once he collected himself, he asked nervously, "So, where's he now?"

"They took him off to the nuthouse, I heard," Ritchie told him grandly, "But the memories of that dark night still linger here. Mikey Seward saw some ghosts when he went in last month, he told me."

"S-S-So what are we doing here now then?"

"We're going in and proving the ghosts are there."

"W-W-W-Why!?"

"Because I say so. Unless you're a chicken."

"I'm, I'm not a chicken, Ritchie, I just...I think we..."

"Well you're sure acting like a big chicken," Ritchie taunted him rather harshly, "What's there really to be afraid of here!?"

An amusing idea sprang up in Laurie's mind. She seized the bush on the far side away from the boys and gave it a rough shaking-perhaps fittingly at the same time as another crash of lightning and thunder crackled overhead. Both boys screamed in terror at the sudden "awakening" of the bush and ran away as fast as they could. Laurie couldn't help laughing to herself. Knowing that others were uneasy about Halloween made her feel a bit better.

Her bliss vanished very swiftly, however, as another bush by the

house rustled abnormally loud behind her-this time accompanied by what sounded ominously like heavy, labored breathing. She spun and brandished the umbrella wildly towards the bush. "Who's there!?" she cried loudly. There was no response and the bush immediately went back to normal. Gulping, Laurie hesitantly approached the bush and gave it a kick. Nothing happened, and there was now no sign that anyone had there in the first place. And she could see no figures around the side of the Myers house when another bolt of lightning briefly lit up the sky and illuminated everything. Laurie took a deep breath and continued walking as fast as the weather would permit up the street. Only about three more blocks to go now-but in the darkness, that seemed like three miles...

If only the power would come back on, she rued; walking in total darkness was adding to the increasing unease she felt. Each house she passed seemed to be staring at her, she thought with dread, the dark windows seeming like piercing eyes. The tree branches creaked eerily in the strong wind above her, looking for all the world like sharp fingers about to descend and seize her. Even the otherwise innocuous barking of a dog on the other side of the street sounded like an ominous warning. The sooner she did get home, the better, for the neighborhood was starting to make her VERY nervous...

She shielded her eyes as the first sign of light in what seemed like ages blazed on up the street; a pair of headlights moving towards her. Another flash of lightning revealed it was Chet Vett's van. Laurie shook her head knowingly. Vett was just the type to be out in inclement weather, a local lunatic who harassed everyone in town to buy things they didn't need. Just two weeks ago he'd barged in on the Strodes at dinnertime, claiming that they simply had to buy his new advanced dish detergent, leaving only when her father had threatened to call the cops on him. But at least he was harmless, so nothing to worry about from him.

A second flash of lightning lit up the night sky. It was at the exact moment of the flash, as the van was about parallel with her, that the driver turned towards her-and Laurie saw very clearly it wasn't Vett. In fact, the driver seemed to have no face whatsoever, just an empty void where it would be. Her blood froze; he-or, quite possibly IT-was looking straight at her-even without a visible face, she could tell it was. She stared numbly as it continued driving down the street, too shocked to move...

When someone abruptly crashed into her from in front, sending her toppling to the ground. "Hey, what the hell do you think you're doing there!?" came Janet's aggravated bellow. "Oh it's you," she snorted with thinly veiled contempt, "They kick you out of the library for the night, Strobe?"

There came the snickering of half a dozen of Janet's usual coterie from the darkness. Laurie tried to block them out as she heaved herself back up. "I'm not really in the mood, Janet, I just...thought I saw something there," she said as calmly as she could.

"Poor Strobe; now she's finally starting to lose her mind, right ladies?" Janet coolly asked her crowd, who burst into outright laughter. Frustrated, Laurie pushed her way past them, trying to block out their parting taunts to her. Much as she'd like to make a stand against Janet one of these days, she knew fighting wouldn't really solve anything, especially when she was just a block and a

half from home now.

Just then there came the crunching of leaves right behind her. She whirled and swung the umbrella around again, but once more no one was there—at least not visibly. And Janet and her friends could be heard continuing down the block the other way, too far away to have caused the sound. But nonetheless, still she could feel somebody there...

"\_Come on Strode, keep it together\_," she tried to reassure herself as she started walking as fast as she could manage, "\_It's all just in your mind. You're getting too carried away by this..."\_

She unexpectedly slipped and fell into a large puddle. Groaning, she got back up yet again and wiped herself dry...

...and saw it not more than five feet behind her. The same hooded, faceless figure that had been driving the van. It lurched ominously towards her, a ghostly white hand extending out from under its robe, directly towards her. Laurie's mouth hung wide open, but no sound was coming out. There was only one discernible option: run for her very life...

In a flash she seized her belongings and took off as fast as she could. Behind her, she could hear the faceless figure increase its pace to keep up with her. She resisted the temptation to look back and blindly charged towards her house, now seemingly a mile away. Her lungs burned and her muscles ached from the supreme effort, but she dared not pause even the slightest.

Only about fifty feet to go now...but she could feel her pursuer breathing almost right down the back of her neck. Twenty feet...she almost slipped again but managed to right herself just in time. Ten feet...she took a flying leap for the door. Fumbling for her keys, she threw it open and all but dove inside, slamming the door shut behind her as hard as she could. She gasped deeply for breath...when a hand suddenly touched her shoulder. With a loud scream she swung her umbrella and made contact. It was at that moment the lights finally blazed back on. "Dad!?" she gasped, seeing him clutching his nose from the impact, "Oh God, I'm so sorry, I didn't see...you got home early...!?"

"The projector broke down, so they sent us home with a refund," her mother entered the kitchen, "We'll...Laurie, what happened!?" she frowned worriedly at her daughter's panicked expression, "You look like you just saw a ghost...!"

"There's someone following me, out there!" she pointed frantically at the window. Mr. Strode hustled over to it and glanced out. "I don't see anyone out there now," he announced.

"But there was, you have to believe me, he chased me up the whole block!" she protested, even though a compulsory look of her own confirmed the now well-lit street was in fact deserted again.

"Of course I believe you, Laurie," he gave her a knowing look that convinced her he did indeed, "Did you get a good look at who it was?"

"I don't...no, not really," she admitted, not really willing to say



her pursuer had no face and jeopardize her credibility.

"All right, I'll go call the police," he reached for the phone, "Caroline, go get her some clean clothes; she's clearly been through something really trying."

"Come on honey, it's all right now," Mrs. Strode put her arm around her daughter and gently led her out of the kitchen. Laurie couldn't help but share this sentiment completely. She felt safe again in the confines of her own house. But what had the figure-who or whatever it was-been after her for? And how had it so suddenly disappeared when it was almost on top of her...?

## 7. All is Ready

9:16 p.m.

Michael kicked in the back door to the hardware store across town. He'd managed to wrench out a large power conductor from the Bainbridge Power Substation after he'd stopped there on the way back to Haddonfield. He'd dropped it and Dr. Clugg's former items (plus Vett's corpse) back at the Myers house once he'd made it back to Haddonfield and ditched Vett's van into the lake outside town. Now he just needed a few small items to complete his plan.

He took note of the clock on the wall in the manager's office. By now his past self had broken out of Smith's Grove and was about a quarter of the way to Haddonfield. He knew he needed to be back in the torture chamber before the Michael of 1978 came home. But first things first.

He strolled up and down the aisles, eyeing the merchandise on display. First stop was the lock section, where he swiped several additional locks; better safe than sorry, he figured. Then he snatched up several long lengths of rope, a fistful of thick handkerchiefs, and a few bottles of chloroform. Lastly came a few cans of gasoline from the lawnmower display; he'd come up with an intriguing idea on the drive back he wanted to try out.

His arms full, he turned to leave, but it was then he heard the scream of sirens getting closer to the store. The flashing lights of two police cruisers slid to a stop right outside. Michael threw himself against the wall, away from the front window. The crunching of footsteps on the gravel in the alley behind the store grew ever louder. "...say happened here?" he heard an unfamiliar voice say.

"Mr. Thorpe says he got a trigger on the silent alarm," Sheriff Brackett's voice rang out. There was a pause before he added, "Oh yeah, someone's definitely been through here. You take the left, Danny, I'll take the right. Yell if see him in here."

Footsteps cautiously entered the darkened store. Michael looked around for an exit of some kind. He noticed a display in the front window filled with various scary figures. Shoving his mask over his face and his ill-gotten gains under his robe, he jumped up on the platform and struck a menacing pose with his knife just as Sheriff Brackett appeared at the top of the aisle, gun in hand. He was aiming his flashlight at the shelves and floor and apparently did not notice

Michael, who was standing stock still at any rate. He stopped right in front of the display and glanced out the window for any sign of the intruder.

"Hey Sheriff," the deputy called from the other end of the aisle, causing Sheriff Brackett to jump in shock. "Oh, sorry Sheriff," the deputy apologized, bustling up the aisle, "I searched everywhere; he's gone now, whoever he was."

"Anything missing?"

"Just some small stuff here and there; register's intact too. What do you suppose he came in here for?"

"I really don't know," Sheriff Brackett admitted, leaning against the pillar right next to Michael, still not aware he was real. "Whoever he is, he sure works fast, being gone already when we're just six blocks away. And why wouldn't he touch the money?" He scratched his head hard, perhaps searching for the answer, then shrugged and continued, "Well, looks like our job's done in here. Let's circle up the block and see if anyone saw anything."

The two of them turned to leave, but the deputy stopped after a few steps. Michael sucked in his breath. "What?" the sheriff asked, sounding impatient.

"Oh, it's just, you have to love the job Mr. Thorpe does with this display every year," the deputy said admiringly, "I mean look at this," he tapped Michael on the arm, "This one looks so real I'd swear it was human."

"Well it's not, Danny, so let's get going; we've still got business to take care of," Sheriff Brackett waved him towards the back exit. Michael remained froze in place until their cruisers drove off from in front of the store before climbing down off the platform. That had been close-too close. It was time to head back home before he got into any more fixes.

\* \* \*

><p>9:39 p.m.<p>

"And you're sure you didn't get a good look at his face?" the officer dispatched to the Strodes asked Laurie, by now all dried off and changed into her nightgown and robe for the evening.

"It was dark and he had his head hung down," she told him, still not willing to admit she hadn't seen a face on her pursuer at all, "But I could tell he meant to do something terrible, it was in his gestures."

"Well you do realize, Miss Strode, that this," the officer turned around the sketch he'd drawn of the hooded figure, "isn't really that much for us to go on. It just might have been someone getting the jump on Halloween a day early."

"But what about that homeless man Laurie said was after her too?" Mr. Strode spoke up, concerned, "Surely you're going to at least try and do something with him?"

"Now him we can go after," the officer hefted another sketch of the homeless man as Laurie had described him, "I personally don't recall seeing him before, but maybe a quick check through the files'll give us a name or two. In the meantime, Miss Strode, I'd just advise you to be careful when you go out, and try and keep in touch with your folks here as much as you can."

"I will," she nodded, "Thank you for coming, officer."

"You have a good night now," he flashed a smile as he got up to go, "We'll let you know if we get anything."

He closed the door softly. All three Strodes took deep, simultaneous nervous breaths. "I don't know if I should take that trip to Carbondale tomorrow," Mrs. Strode spoke up first, "Maybe I'm needed more..."

"It's OK, Mom, you don't have to cancel anything," Laurie tried to reassure her, "I'll be all right, really I will."

"You're absolutely sure about that?" her father raised an eyebrow. Laurie thought it over carefully. "Yes," she nodded, "Now that the police are on it, I think I'll be fine. I'll just take his advice and be more careful." She looked up at them quizzically. "Do you have any idea what's going on here?"

"Your guess would be as good as ours, honey," her mother shrugged. And yet, Laurie thought for the briefest of seconds that she saw her exchange a worried glance with her father-or maybe it wasn't. "Anyway," Mr. Strode spoke up, "I think it would be best if you'd wait at the Doyles tomorrow night until one of us comes by to pick you up, if that's OK."

"I can manage that," she nodded again.

"OK then, you go have a good night sleep, and we'll try and get through Halloween in one piece," he kissed her. Her mother followed suit. "Sleep well, Laurie," she told her daughter as she started for the stairs.

"You too," Laurie called back. She still couldn't shake the feeling that something wasn't quite right. Reaching her room, she instinctively glanced out the window. No one was visible in the darkness through the driving rain at all. And yet, she still couldn't help feeling that some dark force was lurking there just out of sight, waiting.

With a pronounced shiver, she shoved the window closed and drew the blinds shut as far as they would go. She hustled over to the nightstand, dug a nightlight out of the top drawer-one she hadn't used in at least nine years-plugged it into the nearest outlet and flicked it on. She then rifled through her record collection for the most soothing record she had. Settling on James Taylor's Greatest Hits, she dropped the record into place on her player, set the volume low, and lowered the needle, not noticing her hands were slightly shaking from the shocking events of the day. She couldn't help taking one last check out the window before she turned out the light. Still no sign of anyone.

"\_Maybe it's all just some bad dream\_," she thought to herself as she

climbed into bed without bothering to take off her robe and slippers and pulled the blankets completely over her head, "\_Maybe when I wake up in the morning it'll all be over with." \_

\* \* \*

><p>12:31 a.m.<p>

Michael finished connecting the final set of wires on the power conductor to the electric chair in the torture chamber. It was now poised to deliver several hundred fatal kilowatts to anyone unlucky enough to be sitting in it. Still, he wanted to test it to be sure. With no living subjects present, he dragged a decomposing skeleton into the chair and attached the electrodes to its head. He walked over to the switch, and after counting down from ten in his head threw it. In less than five seconds the skeleton was completely reduced to ash and dust. Michael nodded in triumph. Everything was falling into place.

He walked towards the center of the room, accidentally bumping his head off Vett's dangling legs. Michael had strung his corpse up from the ceiling to make the torture chamber's atmosphere all the more chilling. He'd also managed to replace the old straps on the operating table and electric chair with the newer ones from Dr. Clugg's restraint collection. In addition, he'd set up the water torture cell and the coffin at opposite ends of the chamber; he wanted there to be no chance his victims could help each other at all.

And then he heard the creaking of floorboards above him. His past self had come home. Michael heard a loud thump on the floor that he knew to be Judith's tombstone, which he'd yanked up out of the ground with his bare hands back in the day. And even from under the house he could make out his own heavy breathing as his former self became accustomed to familiar surroundings for the first time in fifteen years.

The best thing to do, the future Michael rationalized as he leaned against the wall, his work for the day finished, would be to wait until his former self left tomorrow morning to go stalking before leaving the chamber again; no point in taking a risk by coming face to face with himself, assuming that would do any harm at all. And besides, he had all the time in the world now. No one could stop him now, since no one knew of his plans.

Or so he thought...

## 8. The Two Loomises

October 31, 1978

HALLOWEEN

7:03 a.m.

As dawn broke over Haddonfield, a calm feeling permeated over the rows and rows of neat houses. With last night's storm over, people were rising to greet the day they thought would be like any other, not aware of the terror that was already among them.

It was into this blissful morning scene that a large truck with the words DR. THADDEUS CLUGG, MASTER MAGICIAN painted on the sides rolled through the streets. In the cab, a bleary-eyed Dr. Clugg and Klaus glanced up and down the blocks, their vigil broken only by the buzzing of the police scanner on the dashboard. "No sign of that van anywhere," the hunchback announced to his master, "What makes you so sure he came here to Haddonfield, Dr. Clugg?"

"I have a feeling deep in my gut," Clugg said, leaning out the window to scan an alley they were passing, "My family used to live here; in that same house where the boy murdered his sister all those years back. We should probably check there before..."

"Attention all units, we have a missing person report for a Mr. Chester Vett," the scanner crackled, "Last seen yesterday afternoon driving a red 1969 Chevrolet van found ditched in Lake Carpenter at six this morning, proceed..."

Clugg slammed on the brakes. "You there, sir," he called to an old man walking by, "Which way is it to Lake Carpenter?"

"You go two more blocks, then turn left and follow the highway out of town for about five miles, you can't miss it," the old man told him. Clugg nodded and drove off at a fast clip. "If he ditched the van, Dr. Clugg, he's probably long gone by now," Klaus pointed out.

"But at least we know I was right, as always," Clugg told him, "If we see any cops, we leave; I don't want them breathing down our throats. But mark my words, we'll have our thief by tonight, and when we do find him, there'll be hell to pay."

\* \* \*

><p>7:16 a.m.<p>

Dr. Sam Loomis slouched in his chair in the lobby of Smith's Grove Sanitarium, tapping his fingers impatiently off the arms. The staff had kept Michael's room off limits for the last few hours while they combed it for any clues on how he might have managed to escape. Loomis wished they could hurry it up; he was impatient to get after him. If even one innocent life was taken because of the sanitarium's blatant disregard of his repeated warnings that Michael was far more dangerous than they realized, he was going to hold them all responsible. And every minute wasted here meant Michael was getting farther away...

"Dr. Loomis, I've got someone on the line for you," the receptionist called over. Loomis lurched out of his seat and stumbled towards the front desk; perhaps someone had found Michael already. "Yes!?" he rasped breathlessly into the receiver.

"Dr. Sam Loomis?" asked a voice that sounded strangely familiar.

"Yes?"

"Do you want to catch Michael Myers?"

"Of course," Loomis said. Then he frowned. "How do you

know...?"

"Meet me at the railroad crossing on Route 87 near Freeport in two hours," the person said, "It is vital we talk."

And then he hung up. "Hello?" Loomis tapped the cradle several times. There had been something not quite normal about the caller that he couldn't put his finger on, and how they'd known so clearly about Michael's escape when it hadn't been made public yet was beyond him. Still, if whoever it was had information that would lead to his capture, the doctor was all for a meeting, even a clandestine one.

He hustled for his coat, but it was at that moment a nurse entered the reception area. "You can come in now, doctor," she told him, "You should take a look at what he carved on the door before he broke out; we don't quite know what it means."

"Show me it then," Loomis followed her briskly up the hall. Whatever clues he could get on his own would be equally helpful.

\* \* \*

><p>7:52 a.m.<p>

Michael lounged in the electric chair. He hadn't slept much overnight, but then again he rarely slept anyway. He'd spent the time listening to his past self walking around upstairs, waiting. At the time, he'd had no idea she'd show up at the Myers house this morning. His plan at the time had been to walk the streets until he'd found her, but good luck had smiled on him and given him her whereabouts early.

And it was now that he heard Her voice above. It was too faint to make out exactly what she was saying, but it was unmistakably her. Michael heard the floorboards creak as his past self approached the door. After Her voice faded away, it slammed closed as his past self went outside to stare after her for a few moments. Michael didn't move, however. He had all the time in the world now. There would be no point in going anywhere until after noon, when he'd returned to the Myers house for "lunch." No reason to risk running into himself, he figured. And it wasn't as if anyone could pinpoint his location...

\* \* \*

><p>9:38 a.m.<p>

Loomis pulled his car over to the clearing next to the railroad tracks the caller had specified. He looked around as he hopped out. No one was visible. He did notice something else, however: an abandoned tow truck parked nearby. The doctor strode over and immediately saw the driver lying dead in the bushes next to it. He shook his head grimly. Not even twelve hours were past, and already his worst fears had been proven...

"Dr. Loomis," came the voice abruptly behind him. Loomis spun around and found himself face to face with...himself. Not surprisingly, his first reaction was to faint dead away.

When he came to, he realized he was lying on the passenger seat of his car, which was going very fast. "You took a rather nasty shock there," came his own voice from the driver's side-older but unmistakably his. "I had a bad feeling you'd react..."

"Who are you!?" Loomis demanded, flattening himself against the door, "What do you want from me!?"

"If you'll remain calm, I'll explain everything," his "twin" said. Perhaps to lessen the shock, he was now wearing a false beard and dark glasses. "I'm yourself from the future, Loomis. I've been sent back in time to stop Michael Myers once and for all."

"But...but...you can't..." Loomis stammered, trying to make some logical sense out of it, "It's not possible!"

"I'm not surprised you think that way," his other self said stoically, "But I know that my-our-grandmother's name was Ethel, and when she was twelve, she fell off a moving train and broke nine bones."

"How...how could you know that!?" Loomis was aghast. He'd never told ANYONE that story. "You mean you're...I'm really...?"

"As I said, I will explain," his future self said, "I can't give you the full details of this mission-my employer, who wishes to remain nameless, forbids it. But I can tell you that Michael has, from my point in time, seized the equipment necessary to come back to your time and finish what to you has already begun."

"So there will be blood from this," Loomis mused darkly.

"And gallons of it, I'm sorry to say," his future self shook his head in resigned grimness, "He believes me-you-to be one of his victims, but in reality I faked my death in that instance; didn't really want to, but I had no choice under the circumstances at the time."

"I see," Loomis stared out the window, "Tell me then, Mr...?"

"Call me Samuel," his future self told him, "That should be easier."

"All right, Samuel then, where exactly are you taking me?"

"Haddonfield," Samuel said, "You don't know why he's going there yet, do you?"

"No," Loomis admitted. He'd known from what he'd seen in Michael's room that he was headed home, but he hadn't been completely sure why.

"A girl by the name of Laurie Strode," Samuel told him, "She's his sister, as you would have found out later tonight. He's out to kill her, and although he fails numerous times tonight, he will succeed eventually in the future where I come from."

"But then why is he coming here now if he finishes her off in the future?" Loomis had to ask.

"I suppose he wanted the pleasure of doing it twice," Samuel shrugged, "And that, I believe, is where he has made a critical mistake that could be beneficial for so many people. My orders are simply to bring him back, but I intend to stop his mad reign of terror now before it even starts."

"How do you propose...?" Loomis stopped as he realized his future self's idea, "Destroy the past Michael here and now, and the future one won't exist," he mused, "Oh yes, I see where you're coming from. In that case, count me in; anything to stop a bloodbath."

"But I should warn you it won't be easy," Samuel told him gravely, "Over the years Michael has proved harder to kill than a cockroach. Each time we've thought we've finally done him in, he's come back for more. Which is why I made sure to bring this," he pulled a small disc out of his pocket and held it up for Loomis to see, "This is a secret military device that kills all forms of life within fifty yards of it. Not even Michael could survive this if we detonate it close enough to him. And then his future crimes will never have taken place. Any questions?"

"One, actually," Loomis pointed out, "There's another Michael out there right now too. Suppose we pick the wrong one..."

"Indeed. All the more relevant since I only have the prototype here," Samuel pocketed the device again, "We'll just have to follow your Michael from what I know of his movements on this day and the Strode girl from what I know of her movements and hope we luck out."

"That isn't very reassuring, you know."

"Unfortunately, it's all I can offer," Samuel told him, "Are you still in?"

He extended his arm. Loomis paused for a second, then firmly shook it. "How far out from Haddonfield are we right now?" he asked, turning his gaze back to the road ahead of them.

"About fifty miles," Samuel made a sharp right turn, "I only hope we're not already too late."

## 9. Is It All in the Mind?

11:01 a.m.

Down in the torture chamber, Michael listened to his past self finish up "breakfast." The dog, likely a stray, had somehow gotten into the Myers house at some point just before sunrise and had started barking up a storm once it had seen him. After snapping its neck clean in two to keep it from alerting the neighbors, he'd decided in the end not to let fresh meat go to waste. While "breakfast" hadn't tasted like chicken at all, it had, at least, been more than enough to sustain him for the rest of that Halloween.

Abruptly the sounds of eating stopped. Moments later, the front door crashed shut. His past self was now on the hunt. Michael, though, waited a few minutes before lumbering back up into the Myers house proper. With the sun being close to directly overhead at the moment,



no light shone currently through the shattered downstairs windows, although a brisk breeze rattled the broken glass. Over in the corner behind the dog's corpse, where it had lain until he'd returned for it around six to prepare for the horror show he'd eventually set up at the Wallaces' house, was Judith's tombstone. Michael now hefted it and carried it down into the chamber. Much as he had eventually done at the Wallaces', he wished to make the torture chamber's atmosphere terrifying for his guests once they arrived, and, as in the past (or present as it technically was now), Judith was going to unknowingly help him do it. He set the tombstone down on top of a pair of old cages he'd set up at the head of the operating table; he appreciated the symbolism this would telegraph once he had Her in place. He did one last check in his memory to make sure he'd taken care of everything. Everything did in fact seem to have been accounted for so far. A smile crossed his lips; it was time to begin his own hunt. As long as he didn't run into his past self-which wouldn't be too much of a problem given he remembered his every move on that day-he had nothing to worry about.

Slipping out of the magician's assistant's robe and back into his usual attire, he pushed the chamber door almost all the way closed and sprinted back upstairs, slipping his mask on right before he stepped outside into the afternoon sun. His plan now was to go to her house and wait. When she arrived, he'd pounce. And then, she'd be all his for the rest of the evening-at least until her time came at midnight...

As he walked off for the Strodes' house, he failed to notice Dr. Clugg's truck coming up the street behind him, pulling up in front of the Myers house just as he turned the corner. "This is it," Michael's future cellmate told his hunchbacked assistant as they climbed down from the cab and hustled up to the front door, "This is where the Clugg family legacy began. And I just know in the pit of my stomach our little thief came here."

"Hmm," Klaus peered through the front windows, "No sign of anyone inside, Dr. Clugg."

"He may be down in the chamber if he discovered it; my uncle told me where it was located," Dr. Clugg seized the doorknob hard, apparently expecting to have to force the door open, but looked pleasantly surprised when it opened without any resistance. "Aha, someone HAS been here recently," he proclaimed, nodding at the very prominent NO TRESPASSING sign next to the door that certainly precluded that it would have been normally locked, "Once we do find the chamber, Klaus my friend, we simply wait for him to return. And then, he'll have a very hard lesson to learn from us."

\* \* \*

><p>12:58 p.m.<p>

"...hello in there, earth to Laurie, are you even listening to me?"

Laurie snapped out of her malaise in front of her open locker. Annie was staring at her to the right with raised eyebrows. "That's four times I had to ask to get your attention just now; you've been out of it since third period this morning. What is eating you today?" she asked firmly, looking both mildly concerned and almost bemused at the

same time.

"Oh, uh, nothing, Annie, it's just...I think someone was looking in at me in literature class from across the street," Laurie confessed, putting a number of her books away, "After last night, I can't..."

"Maybe Mr. Faceless from last night wants to ask you for a date tonight," Lynda leaned over Annie's shoulder, clearly trying hard to restrain from laughing, "Maybe he wants to spend Halloween with you in his dark dimension, to ask you to be his bride for all eternity."

She did crack up laughing at this, and Annie had to fight to do the same. Laurie lowered her head. "You don't believe me about any of this, do you?" she asked them, hurt.

"Look, Laurie, it's not that we don't believe you, really, but I mean, honestly, teleporting homeless men and faceless phantoms?" Annie inquired, raising her eyebrows even higher and fighting as hard as she could to keep from laughing, "I think I know what the problem here is: you've been studying too hard lately, and your mind's finally cracked. Maybe it's a good thing you don't drink, or you'd've seen the Headless Horseman coming after you on the way home last night."

"Or the Great Pumpkin rising up out of the pumpkin patch to give her treats," Lynda cracked up harder as the bell rang. She and Annie galloped off to their next class. Laurie slowly swung her locker door closed and slumped her head against it. Were they right that she was starting to crack up? Everything had seemed so real yesterday and this morning, but was it all in her head? She wasn't even really sure anymore.

"Is everything all right, Laurie?" came a sudden, more sympathetic voice in her ear that made her jump. "Oh, Mrs. Hill," she acknowledged her literature teacher, "I, uh...I, um, suppose I'm all right, yeah."

"You just seemed a little off in class earlier," the teacher said, looking genuinely concerned, "Since you're usually so attentive, I worried something was wrong. Everything OK at home...?"

"Yes, yes, my family good, Mrs. Hill, thank you," Laurie told her, wondering how much she should let on about what had been going on for her over the last twenty-four hours, "It's just, well...it's...I've had a lot on my mind lately..."

"Yes, graduation can be a little tough to take the closer you get to it," Mrs. Hill remarked.

"Well, yes, that and...Mrs. Hill, is it possible...I know some people have...what I'm saying...do people my age have breakdowns from studying too hard?" she figured it wouldn't be that detrimental to tell some of it in the end, "I've thought I've seen things the last few days, and some people seem to think..."

"Well, I don't think you have to worry about that, Laurie," her teacher offered some helpful advice, "I've never heard of anyone studying themselves to insanity-certainly very few students in

Haddonfield High even come close to that level these days, it seems. And after all, it is Halloween; people's minds do tend to play tricks on them at times during the Season of the Witch. Whatever's on your mind is probably just your mind working against you."

"Hmm," Laurie mused, unable to stop herself from thinking how much the phrase 'Season of the Witch' would make for a good book or movie title if someone would know how to apply it correctly for whatever reason, "I suppose that's a reasonable explanation. Maybe it was all in my mind..."

"What?"

"Oh, nothing, nothing. Thank you for everything, Mrs. Hill," she told her, starting to walk off. Then another thought that had been nagging her for a good part of the afternoon came to her. "Oh, Mrs. Hill," she spoke up as the teacher was starting to leave, "I've, uh, also been thinking about what we read today, and I can't help wondering...is fate really that unchangeable? I mean, I know what the author was meaning to say, but, well, are we...?"

"Well, Laurie, I suppose that everyone's opinion on the subject of fate's probably a little different," Mrs. Hill admitted, "Some might see it one way and others an entirely different one. And I guess my answer for you would be both yes and no. Sometimes we can't control what happens to all of us, but it's how we handle it that makes a difference. Take for instance Quasimodo; fate dictated he and Esmeralda would never be together happily, but he chose to make the best of the situation, and could be fairly considered heroic by we the readers. And in a way, if we make the right choices when such a decision counts, we can tilt fate in our favor, I suppose, even if the end result isn't a happy one. On the other hand, our futures aren't set in stone; each decision we make along the way changes our fates each second. And since we have this freedom, there's really no need for us to be bound to a certain outcome if we wish. I hope that answers your question."

"Well, sort of. Thanks again, Mrs. Hill," Laurie told her as the bell rang again.

"Glad to help. Well, enjoy the rest of the day, and I think you'll enjoy what we're going to start working on next week," her teacher informed her with a wry smile.

"Can't you give me a hint?" Laurie inquired.

"Now that would spoil the surprise, wouldn't it? Happy Halloween, Laurie."

She walked off. "Happy Halloween to you too, Mrs. Hill," Laurie called back, bustling up the hall towards the chemistry lab. Hopefully Alice wouldn't be too upset she was late; her lab partner had been leaning heavily on her all semester long. Part of her felt at ease now; at least she felt glad she probably wasn't cracking up, and most of what she'd gone through was probably just tricks of the mind. Still, the chance existed that she could be wrong and something far worse could still depend upon her, fate or not...

2:27 p.m.

"Will Michael be here soon?" Loomis asked his future self. They were parked in front of Haddonfield Elementary.

"The very first confirmed sighting of Michael today occurred here around this time," Samuel told him, "He should be coming around that corner any minute now, if my estimation is correct. Here's where we put our plan into action. I want you to follow him and..."

"Here he comes now," Loomis pointed up the street. Although the figure was wearing an as yet unfamiliar mask, he could tell it was Michael right away. His patient strolled casually along the school fence, pausing near the edge. It glanced around. "Down," Samuel pushed his past self to the floor, "We can't risk him seeing us and bolting. That would throw everything off."

The two of them peered over the dashboard. The end of school bell could be heard ringing, and scores of children, many clearly giddy at the thought of trick or treating that evening, poured out into the street. Michael appeared to tense up. "What's he waiting for?" Loomis hissed, worried, "If he harms even one child..."

His words caught in his throat as one snickering young boy ran right into Michael. He froze up in terror at the sight of the killer and ran off as fast as he could in the other direction. Michael, however, did not follow him, but instead began walking slowly back along the fence before climbing into a car that Loomis recognized as the one his patient had stolen off him the previous evening.

"It's time," Samuel opened the driver's side door and tossed the keys to his past self, "Follow him at all costs and keep me informed of his every move from here on. I'm going to locate Laurie Strode and make sure the Michael I'm after doesn't get to her first."

"But where...?" Loomis's question was unanswered as his future self ran off. Shrugging, he started the engine and pulled out into traffic after Michael. His patient slowly inched along for a block or so, apparently tailing another boy walking slowly out of the schoolyard, but eventually sped up to normal speed. Loomis gave pursuit, wondering where this would all lead now.

\* \* \*

><p>3:32 p.m.<p>

The future Michael stood on a sturdy branch of a large oak tree in the Strodes' backyard. It was just about time too. Any minute now, she'd be popping in. And then he'd strike and take her.

Part of him was worried she'd see him; the tree had been losing leaves rapidly all day. But as best he could remember, she hadn't even looked up when she'd come back home, and in fact had just gone right in. So in all likelihood, he was safe.

Excited children ran up and down the street, ruining Michael's peace and quiet. He glowered down at them in contempt...

And then noticed someone else across the street, standing there and

watching the Strode house. Someone very familiar looking. He squinted. No, it couldn't be, not after Dr. Wynn...

But even from a distance, there was no mistaking that scar tissue, even with the beard. Loomis was back-the Loomis from the future that he'd been certain was long dead now. How, Michael didn't know, but this threw a serious wrench into his plans. He couldn't move until the doctor left, and knowing Loomis, that might never happen.

He stood stone still on the branch as he noticed his sister walking up to the house, unaware of his presence. At the same time, he heard a crashing in the bushes next door. His past self was also there. The entire universe seemed to be converging around Michael, and there was nothing he could do about it.

For a good ten minutes, he held still and waited. Finally his previous self took off to do more stalking. Loomis, however, remained firmly rooted across the street, essentially sentencing Michael to the tree. He did have the honor, however perverted though, of watching his sister undress against the bathroom blind and take a shower. This was small comfort, however, given how much he wanted to be inside the house at the moment. By quarter after four, he was starting to get cramped as he saw the blonde running up to the front door. He remembered driving after her for a few blocks before she'd seen him and had gotten spooked. He'd then backed off at that point, deciding he was taking too much of a risk being out so openly before dark, and had waited up the street from the Strode house until his sister had left with the other brown-haired girl around six thirty. But he really was in no mood to wait that long to strike. And he stood a good chance of being seen well before that if any more leaves fell off the tree...

Then from across the street came the sound of a radio buzzing. Michael jerked around and watched Loomis put one to his ear. He couldn't read lips, but clearly his pursuer was agitated over something, as Loomis jammed the radio back into his pocket in disgust and stormed up the street out of sight. His timetable was back on. With a dark grin, he slid down the tree and sneaked up to the window. Crouching low, he peered in and watched Her have a conversation with the blonde, now holding a blouse and making excited, grandiose gestures with her free hand. He bent down out of sight and waited until he heard the front door close and saw the blonde skip away up the street with the blouse, singing happily to herself. No need to take her yet; his sister was priority number one at the moment. He crept towards the front of the house and glanced both ways to make sure Loomis wasn't coming back. The street was now deserted. It was time to act. He dug the bottle of chloroform and a rag from his pocket.

\* \* \*

><p>Laurie wasn't in the best of moods as she finished dressing. It was bad enough people were apparently after her, now it seemed she'd be the only one her age alone and not partying that night in all of Haddonfield. Lynda's surprise visit had only served to drive this unhappy point home. Perhaps, she couldn't help thinking to herself, if the Doyle's got back early enough, and Lynda and Bob had joined Annie across the street at the Wallaces' by that time, she could join them for a little while. Maybe...if things didn't get too far out of hand over there...<p>

No matter, she thought to herself as she trudged downstairs. She would enjoy herself with Tommy that night anyway, no matter what else the night held, and she wouldn't let anything get in the way of that.

She picked up the pumpkin she intended to carve for him from the kitchen table. Now she'd just wait till Annie came by for her at six thirty as agreed and...

Suddenly there came the abrupt sound of a door swinging shut from the living room. Laurie jumped in shock, almost dropping the pumpkin. Hesitantly she grabbed a carving knife off the nearest rack and advanced towards the door. "Who's there!?" she ordered authoritatively, trying to cover up the nervousness in her voice, "If anyone's in there, I'm warning you, I'm armed!"

She stuck her head in the door. No one was visible. Nonetheless, Laurie checked thoroughly under and behind all the furniture; after what she'd gone through last night, she wasn't taking any chances at all. Nothing at all was there, however. She breathed a sigh of relief. Maybe it had just been something letting off heat for the day. Hopefully this wasn't further proof she was cracking up, though. She lowered the knife and started to turn around...

And then, without warning, someone stepped up behind her. A rag was jammed over her face before she could react. Chloroform engulfed Laurie's senses. Frantic, she swung the knife backwards at her attacker, but a hard slap from him disarmed her. Reality swirling around her, Laurie squirmed with all her might to get away, but it was already too late, and she found herself toppling in a heap to the floor as everything went black.

## 11. Unexpected Prisoners

6:33 p.m.

Annie blew her car horn impatiently. "Come on Laurie, where the hell are you!?" she muttered out loud. She'd made it very clear she'd be by at six thirty, and yet no sign of Laurie at all.

With a loud sigh, she got out of the car and marched over to the Strode house. Jamming her finger down on the doorbell so it rang repeatedly, she glanced in through the front window. No sign of anyone inside at all.

"Did she go ahead to the Doyles' earlier?" she wondered to herself, "\_I wouldn't be the least bit surprised given how mental she's been all day. Might as well just head on out; she'll call later with some crazy excuse\_."

With a final shrug of her shoulders, she walked back to her car and drove off-not noticing the beige car with the Illinois state seal and words FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY emblazoned on the sides that pulled out of the nearest alley and started following her...or the yellow car following it...

\* \* \*

><p>"So no sign of the Strode girl at all?" Loomis grimly asked his future self as they tailed the present Michael down the streets of Haddonfield.<p>

"None whatsoever," Samuel grumbled, detectable bitterness in his voice, "It looked like a mild struggle took place. If I hadn't been called away..."

"And for the fifth time, that wasn't my fault!" Loomis shouted defensively, "That truck came out of nowhere! By the time I managed to get out of the wreckage he was already long gone! I had no other choice but to call you in!"

"Perhaps you're right," Samuel took several deep breaths to calm himself down, "I am certainly glad for both our sakes you weren't harmed. But now since the stakes have gotten so much higher, I think we have little choice but to call in the authorities to assist."

"I don't really think a full-scale dragnet is the best idea at this point," Loomis argued, "If it gets out on the news, they'll look for him in every...now what's he doing?"

Michael had pulled over to the curb ahead of them and stopped for the moment. "Waiting until the authorities turn their backs," Samuel instinctively turned right down a side street to keep Michael from seeing them behind him, then hung another right at the intersection after that, "The sheriff's up there, investigating the hardware store robbery he just pulled. You go get him once we circle back around. I'm going to explore a hunch I have."

"And would you mind sharing that with me?" Loomis raised an eyebrow.

"Unfortunately, I can't," Samuel shook his head emphatically, "It's something I have to do on my own. You just do your part of the equation and call me if you don't hear from me in two hours."

He swung back onto the main street right behind where they'd pulled out, just as Michael was pulling back into traffic. The older man turned down the next street after him, then pulled over to the curb next to the hardware store and all but forced his younger self out onto the sidewalk. Loomis stared in wonderment at his future self gunning out after Michael again, then shrugged and hustled over to where Sheriff Brackett was standing by his cruiser. "Sheriff," he waved him down, "Pardon me; I'm Loomis, Dr. Sam Loomis..."

\* \* \*

><p>7:02 p.m.<p>

The sun sank beneath the trees. Darkness, glorious darkness was falling again. For Michael, huffing his way through back hedges with Her prostrate form slung over his shoulder, it couldn't have come at a better time. Now he felt comfortable again.

He cut around the last hedge and found himself standing in front of the Myers house. Hearing some early trick-or-treaters coming up the street, he quickly strode inside and shoved the door shut. Now all he'd have to do was put her in the closet and wait...

Just then he heard an unmistakable clattering noise from the chamber below. He frowned; had a cat gotten in while he'd been out? Or someone or something else entirely? He dumped Her into a chair he'd set up in the middle of the closet and tied her hands together behind it; just enough to make sure she didn't go anywhere if she woke up while his attention was occupied elsewhere. Then he drew his knife and slowly crept down the stairs to the torture chamber. All was quiet inside the chamber now as far as he could tell at first. He stuck his head in the door and looked around. No sign of anyone around, and everything seemed as he'd left it...

And then without warning, a hard blow slammed into his side, sending him flying to the floor. A squat, misshapen form jumped on top of him and pinned him down. "So you're the thief that took my personal belongings," Dr. Clugg stepped out of the shadows, holding a sledgehammer, "Well you're about to find why nobody crosses Thaddeus Clugg and lives to tell about it. Hold him down, Klaus."

He began raining down sledgehammer blows on Michael that would have killed a normal person. Michael looked around for a way to turn the tables. Out of the corner of his eye he noticed the small wand in Clugg's coat pocket that he used to hypnotize-genuinely hypnotize, no less-his subjects and victims. It would have to do for the moment, particularly given Clugg had set down the sledgehammer and was now hefting an ax. The moment he stepped close to Michael, the killer grabbed hold of the wand and turned it on the magician in a flash. "Hey, give me that...you...can't...!" Clugg's voice trailed off as he fell under the spell of his own device. The ax clattered to the floor as he slumped face first to the ground in a stupor. "Give me that, you!" Klaus grabbed for the hypnotizer, but Michael flipped the hunchback onto his back and held the device right in his face until Klaus too was zombified. The killer snapped his fingers, and his two assailants stepped backwards, allowing him to get back up.

Before he could do anything else, however, there came the sound of the front door slamming upstairs. He frowned; now what was going on? Picking up his knife, he crept back upstairs into the closet. Intoxicated laughter filled the Myers house. Michael peered through the keyhole to see the attractive girl that had encountered his sister the previous night when he'd been following her in Vett's van hanging over the staircase railing, making bizarre love to a boy in a skeleton costume. "Are you sure we should really be in here, Janet?" he asked between kisses, "This place might not be safe, you know."

"Oh come on, Dick, don't tell me you believe those kiddie stories about how this place is haunted?" the girl retorted.

"No, but I don't think we should stay here too long if you ask...what was that?"

There was a low moan behind Michael. His sister was coming to. Digging through his pocket for the chloroform, he dumped half the bottle on the rag and jammed it over her face. She moaned in protest before slumping unconscious again.

"Ah, it's probably just the wind," the attractive girl scoffed, "I'm going to go see if there's a bathroom in this dump."

She staggered comically up the stairs, laughing loudly for no



apparent reason at all. The boy pressed himself against the wall, looking around nervously. Michael saw an opportunity at hand. He slowly crept out of the closet when the boy's back was turned and sneaked up behind him. In a flash he drove the knife home. His victim let out a low howl before collapsing, but the girl apparently didn't hear this from upstairs. Michael dragged his latest kill into the closet and closed the door. Then he took out the hypnotizer and took his place at the bottom of the stairs. It took a few minutes, but eventually the popular girl came stumbling back downstairs. "No bathroom, Dick," she announced out loud in a drunken stupor, "Guess we'd better get...Dick? Where'd you go, Dick?"

Michael leaped out from his hiding place next to the stairs. He covered her mouth with one hand and held the hypnotizer in front of her face with the other. The initial look of sheer terror on her face at the sight of him quickly gave way to entranced indifference. Michael beckoned for her to follow him into the closet, then pointed for her to sit down on the floor; as long as she was hypnotized, she wouldn't be going anywhere at the moment, although better if he could secure her better in a minute. In the meantime, he hefted her boyfriend's corpse and carried it down into the chamber below. Soon it would be time to put Phase 2 into effect...

## 12. The Trap is Sprung

7:34 p.m.

Laurie slowly drifted back into consciousness. She felt quite sick, and her wrists hurt for some reason. Slowly but surely, the struggle at her house came back to her-the unseen intruder that had overpowered and chloroformed her...

She opened her eyes to see...nothing, as everything was pitch black wherever she was now. She became aware that she was tied to the chair she was sitting in, accounting for the pain in her wrists. Something soft but thick had also been bound over her mouth, as she found when she tried to cry out for help and got only a low muffled moan. But she wasn't alone: the sound of someone struggling could be heard to her left. At first, she could make nothing out when she turned her head towards the sound, but as her eyes adjusted to the faint sliver of light streaming from under the door directly in front of her, she made out a familiar figure thrashing about in another chair: Janet...

"\_Why?"\_ she thought to herself, confused and worried by their sudden predicament, "\_Why kidnap the two of us? Who would...?" \_

And then it slowly materialized out of the darkness in front of her without warning, as if by magic: a monstrous Shape with a pale white face. There was a low muffled shriek from Janet at its sudden appearance, and it took all of Laurie's self-control not to do the same-particularly since the Shape was staring right at HER. It walked towards her and slowly glanced at her from head to toe, lingering in places Laurie definitely did not want to be looked at. Her eyes went quite wide as she saw the knife in its hand, glistening in the weak light coming from under the door. Without making a sound, the Shape slid the knife down the length of her arm without actually making contact. Laurie had no idea what it was planning at the moment-and the ambiguity frankly terrified her.

"Maybe it's not money he...it wants," a horrible thought occurred to her, "Maybe it wants...my body...or worse...!"

Just then, her ears picked up a very welcome sound: voices getting louder, approaching wherever they were. Laurie's heart leaped as she heard a door creak open on the other side of her door. "HELP!" she screamed as loud as she could through her gag, "SOMEBODY HELP...!"

The Shape abruptly thrust its knife to her throat, forcing her to stop. With its other hand it smothered Janet's face even though it was clear she had been gagged too. Footsteps trudged across the floor outside the door, and the gleam of a flashlight snaked through the door's edges. "What is that?" came a man's low voice on the other side.

"A dog," came a second voice that Laurie recognized as Mr. Brackett's. "Still warm." the sheriff mused softly.

"He got hungry," the first man said grimly, making Laurie grimace in horror at the mere thought of whatever the Shape might have done to the poor creature.

"Ah, could have been a skunk," the sheriff scoffed.

"COULD have..."

"A man wouldn't do that..."

"This isn't a man," the way the other man said this made a shiver run down Laurie's spine. She glanced up at the Shape, who certainly didn't seem all that human at the moment to be sure. Other than slightly heavier breathing, it made no sign that the arrival of the newcomers made any difference to it. Nevertheless, it kept its knife firmly against Laurie's throat even after the men had started climbing upstairs to the second floor. "It happened in here," Laurie could just make out the other man saying directly above them, "She was sitting right here. He could have seen her through this window. Standing on the lawn, he could have seen inside..."

A loud crash rang out from above, making Laurie jump in surprise. Above her, however, the man breathed a loud sigh of relief, followed by a forced laugh. "You must think me a very sinister doctor," he half-joked to the sheriff, "Oh, I do have a permit."

"Seems to me you're just plain scared," Sheriff Brackett sounded unconvinced.

"Yes, yes, I am," the other man took a deep, nervous breath, "I met him fifteen years ago. I was told there was nothing left, no reason, no conscience, no understanding, and even the most rudimentary sense of life or death, good or evil, right or wrong. I met this six year old child with this blank, pale, emotionless face, and the blackest eyes; the devil's eyes. I spent eight years trying to reach him, and then another seven trying to keep him locked up, because I realized that what was living behind that boy's eyes was purely and simply evil."

The Shape, also apparently listening in, let out a very deep breath.

Laurie had little doubt whom the topic of the conversation was. Whoever was holding her captive, he now seemed to be even more unhinged than she'd thought...

"What do we do?" Sheriff Brackett asked.

"He's been here once tonight," the other man said, "I think he'll come back. I'm going..."

There came a loud buzzing sound. "What've you got?" Sheriff Brackett asked out loud-probably over his radio, Laurie surmised from the crackling sound that was ringing above them now. She couldn't make out what the policeman on the other end of the radio was saying, but whatever it was, it made the sheriff say, solemnly, "Oh? Really? Be right there, then. Just got another call, mister," he told his companion, "Missing person report-someone I know, in fact-so that takes precedence over this. I've got to check it out right now."

"Go right ahead," the other man said calmly, "I'll be here, waiting for him. But I believe, Sheriff, that in the end you'll find whatever you've being called to is connected with what I'm telling you."

"Maybe. I sure hope not, though. I'll check back in an hour," Sheriff Brackett said, sounding more than a little worried now. His feet thumped back down the stairs and out the front door. Moments later, Laurie heard an engine start and the blare of a police siren that slowly faded away. She listened as the other man paced around in circles upstairs for some time before coming downstairs himself. He paused for a moment, making Laurie wonder with trepidation if he'd heard Janet and herself at any point before, but her heart sank as the door slammed shut and his footsteps trudged away. It was only then that the Shape removed the knife from her throat. This did not make her feel any better, however, given that it continued to stare psychotically at her. The sooner both she and Janet got out of this, she knew, the better. But how...?

\* \* \*

><p>8:06 p.m.<p>

"Annie, something's going on over at the Doyle's," Lindsay Wallace called from her front window.

"Like what?" Annie joined her at the window-and was amazed to see almost half a dozen police cars parked by the DoYLES' across the street. "What do you think happened?" the younger girl asked, looking concerned.

"I don't know, but...wait a minute, here comes my dad," she frowned, seeing him in fact walking towards the Wallaces' now, with Tommy Doyle in tow. "Wait here; I'll take care of this," she told Lindsay, bustling to the front door just as the doorbell rang. "Dad, what's going on?" she asked once she opened it for him.

"Maybe something big," he looked grim, "And maybe you could help me a little, Annie. Was the last time you saw Laurie when she went by our house earlier on?"

"Well, I called her around four thirty, and she seemed all right

then. Why?" her stomach started dropping, "What's happened, Dad?"

"We're still not sure," he shook his head, looking quite worried, "Laurie never showed up to babysit Tommy here," he gestured at the boy, who looked, if possible, even more worried, "His parents waited about a half hour, then called us. Did Laurie say or do anything suspicious this afternoon that you noticed? Annie?"

She couldn't answer. Inside she was horror-struck. Perhaps Laurie HAD been seeing someone watching her all around town after all. "She...she did say she thought someone had been following her lately, Dad," she admitted, now regretting having driven away from the Strodes' earlier without fully checking out the house, "I...I thought it was all in her mind...I'd never have thought..."

"I see," he mused softly, "Did you happen to see anyone or anything suspicious?"

"No...wait, there was this guy earlier, he was driving past us on the way home from school," she suddenly remembered the incident, but decided not to let on that she had shouted at the driver and perhaps set him off, "Laurie did seem a little freaked out by him; I thought it was someone from school at the time..."

"Did you get a good enough look at him?"

"No, but it was a beige car. I didn't get the license plate, though."

"I see," he nodded, writing something down on a notepad. "All right, thank you, Annie; this may help us with the investigation. Before I go, would you be willing to watch Tommy for the rest of the night?" he put a hand on the boy's shoulder, "His folks already had to go."

"I guess so," she nodded softly, still a bit stunned from what she'd been told.

"OK then. And above all, Annie, be VERY careful here tonight. We think that there could be someone in town tonight who's very dangerous, so if I were you, I'd lock all the windows and doors and keep an eye open at all times. In fact, I'd feel more comfortable if I brought you home myself, so I'll be by at eleven to pick you up if this is over by then; we can worry about your mother's car tomorrow. Oh, and Annie..."

"Yes?" she'd been turning to leave with Tommy.

"I thought I warned you not to smoke, young lady," he waved an accusing finger at her, but didn't push the matter any further as he trudged back towards the street. Annie groaned as she closed the door; he HAD noticed earlier after all. But that was quickly driven out of her mind as the full weight of what her father had said began sinking in: Laurie was likely in trouble, and she'd ignored the warning signs when they'd been in plain sight...

Even without realizing it, she trudged almost zombielike to the kitchen, where she slumped into a chair and buried her face in her arms. All these years, she'd almost taken Laurie for granted, but

now, in the present, she couldn't imagine life without her friend-and now she realized just how great of a friend Laurie had been. And if she was in any true danger...

"Are you all right?" Tommy had appeared in the doorway without any warning. Annie jumped slightly from the surprise. "Oh, uh, yeah," she said quickly, "Uh, you, uh, you didn't notice anything over your place that might help...what is it?"

Tommy looked pale. "I saw the Boogeyman, over here, just after you showed up," he pointed out the window. Annie walked over to it and squinted out. "There's nothing there now," she frowned.

"But I saw him, I swear!" the boy insisted, "I'm sure he's got Laurie; I told her not to go to the Myers house this morning; she must have woken him up or something...!"

"Now just relax, I'm sure this is nothing to be upset about," Annie assured him in the calmest voice she could manage, "I'm sure my dad'll find Laurie in the next hour or so, and she'll be all right. Why don't you go play with Lindsay? I'm going to make an important call."

"OK," Tommy ambled back to the living room. Annie glanced around the corner to make sure he wasn't listening in, then closed the door, reached for the phone, and dialed a familiar number. "Hello?" an somewhat inebriated voice picked up after a few rings.

"Bob, put Lynda on, this is important," she told him firmly.

"Give me a minute," Bob told her. It was, though, more than a minute later before Lynda came on the line. "Hiya, Annie, how's it hanging?" she asked jovially, clearly having already had one too many.

"Lynda, listen, this is bad," Annie told her grimly, "Something's happened to Laurie..."

"Oh, you mean she finally found a date...?"

"Damn it, Lynda, this is no joke, so just shut up and listen to me!" Annie roared loudly. She pressed an ear to the door to check that Tommy and Lindsay hadn't been alerted to the shout before continuing, "She never showed up to babysit Tommy; my dad's over there looking into it right now, so I know it's something serious. And Tommy's saying something about the Boogeyman; I don't know what he might have seen, but I can tell this is bad, this is really, really bad (had she looked over her shoulder out the window, she might have seen a pale Shape in the bushes, one that quickly dropped out of sight when she turned slightly in its direction and started moving away from the house). Laurie's in danger, I just know it, and we have to do something, right now, or she might be..." she found herself sniffing back tears, "We owe her, both of us, if we want to call ourselves her friends; we owe it to her to find her and help her. Do you understand me, Lynda van der Klok!?"

There was a sobering silence on the other end of the line. "Where and when do you want me?" a decidedly worried Lynda asked slowly.

"At the Wallaces', as soon as humanly possible," Annie told her firmly, "We'll go from there. And try not to drink anything else; I'd

like you as sober for this as possible."

"All right, we're on our way," Lynda said in parting before hanging up. Annie trudged back to her seat and stared blankly ahead into space, hoping that what she was planning would be in time to help Laurie-if they could find her...

\* \* \*

><p>8:25 p.m.<p>

Laurie strained hard with her wrists, trying hard to loosen the ropes. Whoever her abductor was, he-or perhaps IT-seemed rather adept at tying knots, for she had little slack to work with. She knew she had to keep trying, though; there was no telling what else the Shape had in mind for Janet and herself. At the moment, the Shape had melted back into the darkness, but she could still hear its labored breathing, and indeed, she somehow sensed its presence all around the darkened room.

She could also hear Janet sobbing hysterically to her left as she threw herself around her chair in a wild panic. In spite of all the dirty tricks the popular girl had played on her over the years, Laurie couldn't help feeling sorry for her at the moment; she could understand how traumatic the situation was. Glancing around to make sure the Shape wasn't (directly) watching, she jerked towards Janet until the two of them were quite literally face to face, and she could see straight into Janet's terrified eyes. \_"It's going to be OK,"\_ she enunciated as best as the gag would allow, \_"We'll get through this all right, trust me." \_

Janet stopped struggling, a stunned and surprised look on her face. She mumbled something through her own gag that sounded like, \_"How do you know? And how can you ask me, after...?" \_

\_"Because I care about people," Laurie mumbled back as best she could, \_"Even those who don't like me. I'm here if you need anything, Janet." \_

Janet bowed her head in shame, a look of deep humility on her face. Laurie raised a sympathetic leg onto her fellow captive's kneecap. \_"Come on, turn around,"\_ she mumbled at her, \_"We can work on each other's ropes." \_

Janet nodded in acknowledgement and started to jerk around in a circle so she and Laurie would be back to back. Unfortunately, it was at this point that the Shape materialized out of the darkness and roughly pushed the two of them as far apart as it could. Without saying a word, it then bent down and removed Laurie's right shoe, but not her left. She frowned, completely puzzled, as it gently slipped the shoe outside the door and closed it, then started rummaging in its pockets for...something. \_"What's he\_ \_up to now?"\_ Laurie thought to herself, wondering at the same time if she really wanted to know...

\* \* \*

><p>8:32 p.m.<p>

"No sign of Michael here," Loomis said over his radio to his future

self, "Any luck on your end?"

"Nope," Samuel admitted, "I'm going yard to yard on the block he was on at this time to..."

"Freeze!" came a loud shout, followed by the sound of lots of guns cocking. "Blast," Samuel grumbled, "the authorities. I shouldn't have..."

The line clicked off in a blast of static. Loomis shook his head, hoping this could be cleared up quickly. He leaned against a tree in front of the Myers house, where he'd been standing guard for the last hour. Thus far, few people had passed by the Myers house during that time, and things were in fact so calm that under normal circumstances, Loomis might have considered stepping out for a coffee. He knew better than to walk away now, though, especially with lives at stake...

Just then, he heard a low crashing in the bushes two houses down, followed by a scraping sound. Loomis jerked around. Trick-or-treaters didn't usually go crawling through the bushes like that. He drew his gun and hustled quickly towards the house in question. Sure enough, when he looked around the side of the house, he saw a dark Shape trying to climb up the fence-a very familiar Shape...

"Michael," the doctor barked. His patient slowly turned and stared intently at him, as if daring Loomis to make the first move. Loomis trudged slowly towards him. "It ends now before it begins, Michael," he said sternly, keeping his gun trained on him, "Come over here and..."

Without warning, Michael swung his knife at Loomis. Loomis jumped out of the way in time, but the sudden maneuver made him lose focus long enough for Michael to plow into him, knocking him down, and then take off running up the street. Loomis rolled onto his chest and fired a pair of shots after his patient, both of which missed. He heaved himself up and chased after the killer, but Michael proved too fast, despite all the time he'd spent locked in the asylum before this evening. Finally, he jumped into Loomis's former car, which was parked up the street, and peeled off into the night. Loomis huffed to a stop in the middle of the street and cursed his bad luck...

...until he heard the blaring of a horn right behind him. A taxi was coming straight at him. Loomis quickly flagged it down. "Follow that car," he instructed the cabdriver, pointing at Michael's car disappearing into the distance.

"Hey, I run a business, pal; this ain't no movie," the cabdriver retorted, "Give me one good reason I should."

"How about because Benjamin Franklin says so!?" Loomis shoved a hundred dollar bill into the man's hand.

"Works for me," the cabdriver gestured him into the taxi and burned rubber after Michael.

\* \* \*

><p>8:58 p.m.<p>

Annie saw the familiar van coming up the street. She waved it into the parking space in front of the Wallaces' with the two flashlights she'd found in the kitchen drawer. She knocked on the driver's window, which took a good minute to roll down. "Bob, go look after the kids while we're out," she told him, raising her eyebrows when he stumbled out of the van, half-drunk, "I'll get nailed if they're unattended. We'll be back in an hour if we don't find anything. Keys."

He tossed them towards her, almost missing. Annie rolled her eyes and climbed into the van, again not noticing the winded, huffing Shape rising up to glance out from behind the nearby bushes-which then quickly ducked back down out of sight before she could have gotten a good look anyway. The police had largely left the Doyle house across the street by now, her father included, and the two officers still left weren't paying her any attention anyway. "I can drive, you know," Lynda insisted with a slur across from her in the passenger seat.

"I'm sure you could, Lynda, but then we'd get picked up for driving on the sidewalk, and my dad would never let me hear the end of it," her friend pulled into traffic, "I just hope you're sober enough to help with this."

"Of course I'm totally sober," the blonde insisted. Her expression grew more somber. "Any news?"

"None," Annie shook her head grimly, "I've watched the Doyle house like a hawk since I got the news; no sign of Laurie at all, so I know it's serious. She wouldn't just disappear without telling anyone, especially us."

Lynda merely grunted knowingly. "So where're we going first?" she asked, gazing almost dreamily out the window.

"It's a long shot, but it's worth a try," Annie told her, "When Tommy came over to Lindsay's, he mentioned Laurie had been at the Myers house this morning. Maybe someone was in there or something."

"Maybe it was the guy you yelled at when we were walking home," Lynda suggested offhandedly, "He was totally uptight about the whole thing."

"Oh God, I hope not," Annie shivered; if yelling at that driver had caused him to snap and come after Laurie, she'd never live with herself. The two of them were quiet the rest of the way to the Myers house, where they pulled in right behind Dr. Clugg's truck. "Hey, I saw this guy's show last year," Lynda commented, stumbling out of the van, "It was totally too bizarre."

"But what's it doing here?" Annie frowned, handing off one of the flashlights to her friend. Taking Lynda by the arm when she started swaying drunkenly, she led her friend slowly towards the Myers house, which loomed ominously before them in the night. "This is a total dump," Lynda commented out loud as they climbed up onto the porch, "I hope whoever buys this off Laurie's dad tears it down and builds something that's..."

A sudden loud crash behind them made both girls cry out. They turned



and breathed a simultaneous sigh of relief to see it had merely been the drainpipe falling to the ground. "See, that's what I mean," the blonde continued, "That could have totally hurt someone who..."

"Quiet," Annie raised her hand, a worried look on her face. She glanced warily through one of the broken windows. "I thought I saw something moving in there," she whispered softly, "Stay behind me; run if anything happens."

She flicked on her flashlight and pushed at the door, which creaked open like a coffin lid. The two of them crept inside the house, which seemed completely deserted. The floorboards creaked loudly under their feet, and the wind howled softly through the other broken windows on the first floor, adding an ominous whistling sound to the haunting environment around them. "Hello?" Annie called softly, shining her flashlight uneasily around the front hallway, "Laurie? Anyone?"

There was no response and still no sign of life. Annie gulped nervously; the house was making her very ill at ease. The sooner they got this over with, the better.

"You see anything?" she mumbled to Lynda, who was staggering into what had once been the living room to their right.

"Not unless someone turns on the lights," the blonde almost laughed out loud for seemingly no reason, leaning against the wall to keep from falling over, "You see the switch anywhere?"

"I don't think it'll work, Lynda; I think they shut off the juice after the Myerses moved away," Annie aimed her flashlight up the stairs, but saw nothing out of the ordinary within its beam, "Wish they'd left it on, though," she shivered, "All those stories about this place..."

"So what are we supposed to be looking for, anyway?" Lynda asked, now slumped against the wall and shining her own flashlight straight into the corner without moving the beam at all.

"Any sign that Laurie might be in here, anything at all-and the sooner..." Annie stopped midsentence as the sound of glass breaking in the direction of what was once the kitchen rang out. She gulped worriedly. "Wait here," she hissed at her friend, then started walking very slowly towards the closed kitchen door. If only she'd thought of bringing something as a weapon in case of a fight, she rued to herself. At least, though, the flashlight would make a reasonable weapon. She reached the kitchen door and pressed herself against it. Taking a deep breath, she seized the knob, flung the door open, and shone her flashlight straight into the kitchen...

...into the face of an equally terrified raccoon, who chattered in fright and scuttled rapidly out the kitchen window, breaking more of its glass in the process. Annie breathed a huge sigh of relief and turned around...

"BOO!" Lynda, her flashlight held vertically under her chin to illuminate her face, shouted right in her friend's face, having sneaked up undetected directly behind her. She laughed loudly as Annie shrieked in terror and jumped back into the kitchen. "Oh, that

got you good!" she snorted in hilarity, "You should have seen...!"

Unamused, Annie whacked her hard across the shoulder. "What the hell's the matter with you!?" she demanded, "This is serious business, Lynda, remember!?"

"Oh come on, Annie, can't you take a joke!?" the blonde protested.

"Not when Laurie's in danger, as I told you very clearly over the phone, Lynda! You did have more to drink before you came by the Wallaces', didn't you!? I swear, sometimes you're more trouble than you're worth!"

"Hey don't yell at me; I was just trying to...!" Lynda let out a low cry as she toppled backwards over something. "Now what!?" she complained loudly, "I thought all the furniture was moved out of this place a long time ago!?"

"That doesn't look like furniture, Lynda..." even in the darkness, Annie could tell the object her friend had fallen over was something animate-or at least had once been. She shone her flashlight on it-and had to jam her fist into her mouth to keep from screaming at the sight of the badly mutilated dog lying on the floor. Who would have done that to a dog, she thought fearfully to herself? And if it was the same person who'd grabbed Laurie...

She noticed something else in the corner of her flashlight beam. She shone it directly at the object-and instantly, her stomach dropped clean to her ankles. "That's Laurie's shoe," she whimpered in horror, "Oh my God, Lynda, I hope that doesn't mean...!"

"Do you hear that?" a now worried Lynda was staring at the closet door behind the shoe. And Annie heard it too; muffled moaning. She frantically threw the door open. "Laurie!" she gasped upon seeing her friend, fortunately unharmed, but gagged and tied to a chair, moaning desperately at her, "Laurie, what hap-!"

Without warning, something swooped in behind her. Suddenly, a cloth was pressed hard over her face, smothering her with the overwhelming smell of chloroform. Annie fought to escape her assailant's grip, but he was far too powerful for both her and Lynda, whom she could see was also being chloroformed, and it took mere seconds for her to succumb and pass out.

### 13. The Full Horror of His Plan Revealed

Michael grinned in dark triumph as his latest victims succumbed to the chloroform and collapsed to the floor. Now he had everyone he'd been aiming for.

Behind him, his sister was moaning loudly in terror at the sight of her friends' capture. She threw herself around in her chair with such fury that it almost tipped over. Michael stormed over and jammed the chloroformed rag over her face. With the gag already holding her mouth shut, she quickly passed out again. Michael turned and chloroformed the popular girl as well, for she was in the middle of her own hysterical fits. He hoped they'd all stay out cold until he

got everything set up in the torture chamber, for he was now completely out of chloroform.

There was only one thing left to check: he shuffled over to the front door and glanced around to see if his sister's friends had brought anyone with them. As it was, the street looked completely deserted, and even better, there was no sign of Loomis anywhere. Satisfied, he closed and locked the door and jammed a long bulk of loose wood over the knob to block it to outsiders. Returning to the closet, he pick up the curly haired girl in one arm and the blonde in the other and carried them down the stairs into the chamber. He snapped his fingers at the hypnotized Clugg in the corner. He'd need their help setting everything up for the final phase of his plan...

\* \* \*

><p>9:20 p.m.<p>

"Well Dr. Loomis never told me he had anyone working with him," Sheriff Brackett told Samuel, who was leaning against his cruiser, parked in front the Doyles' house once more, "What did you say your name was again?"

"Just call me Mr. Smith," Samuel said.

"Well if I knew about you, maybe we wouldn't have jumped you like that," the sheriff said in a half-apology. He activated his radio again. "Anything, Danny?" he asked his deputy.

"Nothing yet, Sheriff," the deputy told him, "We're searching around Haddonfield High now; no sign of the Strode girl at all."

"Keep looking," Sheriff Brackett urged him. He sighed in frustration. "What am I going to tell her parents when they get back?" he asked out loud. He rounded on Samuel. "Next time I see your friend Loomis, remind me to chew him out for letting this guy out. If he kills even one..."

Samuel abruptly groaned loudly and doubled over, clutching his chest in agony. "What!?" Sheriff Brackett rushed towards him, "Heart attack!?"

"No," Samuel grimaced heavily, "But I do believe something terrible has happened." He put his hand under his shirt and felt a large scar on his chest that he knew hadn't been there before.

There came the squealing of brakes as two cars pulled over across the street. Mr. and Mrs. Strode popped out and rushed over toward the sheriff's cruiser. "Lee," the former greeted him worriedly, "Any news!?"

"None right now, Morgan," Sheriff Brackett shook his head, "I saw Laurie myself when I was leaving for work earlier today. That was around three; nobody's seen her since then. My associate Mr. Smith here," he gestured towards Samuel, still clutching his chest in pain, "believes he knows exactly who...oh my good Lord...!"

He glanced in shock up the block. For the Loomis of the present was staggering towards them, clutching his chest much the way his future self was. "What happened!?" Samuel ran up to him.

"He jumped me in the asylum's car," Loomis groaned, removing his hand to reveal a large bloodstain, "He turned around and rammed the cab I was in head-on. I tried to stop him from taking out the cabdriver, but I failed, and he left me with this."

"He did!?" Sheriff Brackett looked grave now, "That does it, I'm calling the radio and TV stations right away; we need to get the word out that..."

"Will someone please tell us what's going on here!?" Mrs. Strode interrupted.

"I believe I can best handle that," Samuel stepped forward. "Sheriff, take Dr. Loomis here to the hospital and ensure he's all right. Then the two of you circle up to the north end of town and search block by block. Mr. Strode, Mrs. Strode, come with me; we'll search the south side. We'll meet at the Myers house in an hour if we don't find anything."

"I feel perfectly fine to..." Loomis started to protest, but a raised eyebrow from his future self and a quick jerk of his finger towards his chest made him nod softly and mumble, "Very well." He slowly climbed into Sheriff Brackett's cruiser while Samuel waved the Strodes into his own car. "Mr. Smith, would you please tell my wife and I what's going on with Laurie?" Mr. Strode demanded once they were in the back seat.

Samuel held up his hand and waited until he'd pulled out into traffic before explaining solemnly, "I'll be perfectly frank with the two of you on this whole matter: your daughter's life is almost certainly in grave danger as we speak. I'm sure you remember the circumstances in which you adopted her? Well..."

\* \* \*

><p>9:42 p.m.<p>

Laurie was starting to feel very sick from the repeated chloroforming as she came to again. Her head was spinning wildly, but she was conscious enough realize she was lying on her back, and something heavy seemed to be holding her in place.

She opened her eyes-and let out a scream that would have carried for miles if she hadn't still been gagged. Hanging from the ceiling above her were two corpses, their lifeless eyes staring blankly back down at her through the dim light in the room she was in. She squirmed about and found herself solidly secured to a table of some kind-her wrists, chest, waist, knees, and ankles were all strapped down tight enough to hold her completely motionless-inside a room that looked like something out of one of the low budget horror films aired this time of year by the independent stations serving Haddonfield. Only this wasn't a film. This was deathly real.

Her mind flashed back to her last moments of consciousness-the Shape capturing her friends. So that had been what its game had been. Her heart froze as she thought of what might have befallen them-whether they were even still alive...

But the sound of loud muffled cries to her left gave reassurance that

she at least wasn't alone. She turned her head-the only part of her body she could move at all-to see Annie, gagged herself and strapped down to a large chair, but apparently unhurt as she jerked about from side to side trying to get loose. Then again, Laurie couldn't help noticing the wires trailing out from under Annie's pant leg that seemed to be connected to a generator of some kind behind the chair, like electrodes of some kind...

More heavily muffled cries also filled the air, in front and behind her. Laurie tried to look backwards, but her view was completely blocked by a thick stone slab of some kind that had been laid on the edge of the table behind her head. The view in front of her was wide open, though, and there she saw Lynda, who was also gagged, straitjacketed, and locked upside-down in a tall metal and glass case. She was twisting around in circles inside the case, apparently trying to simultaneously get her arms up over her head and get her feet out of the stockades at the top of the case that had her locked in her upside-down position-clearly a very tall order from what Laurie could tell.

The whole ordeal now made even less sense to her. What was the Shape's motive in kidnapping them all? Money clearly wasn't its driving force anymore...

Speaking of the Shape, it now approached her from her right, still breathing heavily. Just the sight of it sent chills down Laurie's spine. She turned her head away, hoping it would just leave her alone, but it continued standing there, apparently just staring at her. Finally she could take no more and opened her eyes again in the other direction-and screamed into the gag again to find two very ugly men-one of them deformed-staring at her as well with blank, soulless glances. It was then the Shape snapped its fingers, and the men shuffled off out of sight behind the stone slab at Laurie's head. She strained to look around it-and noticed the edge of what appeared to be a coffin set on sawhorses shaking violently, thus revealing Janet's fate to her-but could no longer make out the men, apart from a loud clanking sound. She craned her head, and got a good look at the slab. It was actually a tombstone with the name JUDITH MYERS written on it. Judith Myers...there was something familiar about this name, but she couldn't quite put her finger on it...

The clanking grew louder, and the next thing Laurie knew, she was looking right up at a large iron slab with long, sharp spikes pointing downwards...RIGHT AT HER. Her heart froze as the Shape and its associates locked the structure the spikes were on into place around the table she was strapped down to. Now she knew all too clearly what its intentions were. And it scared her to death.

She dared to look up at the Shape. It gave her a brief, emotionless glance before turning its blank gaze to the spikes. It ran its hand down the length of one of them, nodded, and walked briskly out of sight behind the tombstone again. There came loud muffled cries from Annie to Laurie's left as she took in what her friend's apparent predicament was to be. Laurie rolled her head over and noted her friend straining harder than ever to get out of the chair. She more than appreciated Annie's concern for her-even if it appeared Annie seemed unaware of the possible danger she herself was in-but Laurie knew it would take too long for her friend to be able to help her directly. She started straining hard against the straps holding her down to the table, hoping her time-and that of her fellow

prisoners-wasn't nearly up...

#### 14. Time's Up

9:59 p.m.

Deep in the bushes outside the Wallace house, a dark shape was shaking its head in disgust. Two hours and not a single sign of Her, and its other intended victims had all left the area, not to return.

There was only one rational thing left to do now; return to home base and wait for the chance to come again. After all, it still had all night to work with. And so, after a glance to make sure the authorities still hovering up the block weren't looking, it started creeping back through the bushes towards the one place in Haddonfield it still felt safe at.

\* \* \*

><p>10:24 p.m.<p>

It was taking all of Laurie's self-control not to have a total nervous breakdown. As she strained with all her might against the straps holding her down, she was aware she was making deep, hyper breaths and sweating profusely. She didn't need any more of a motivation than the one hundred or so iron spikes hanging ominously above her, ready to come crashing down whenever the Shape deemed proper.

Time had slowed to a standstill in the stone-walled room that was the girls' prison, and the seconds ticked by with agonizing sloth. The silence was perhaps worst of all, broken only by the low cries of the four prisoners into their gags. Neither the Shape or its assistants had said a word at all, spending most of their time leaning against the wall, except for occasionally walking around to silently check that their hostages were still secured.

A loud thump rang out, shattering the silence. Laurie grimaced; Lynda had smacked her head against the glass front of the chamber she was imprisoned in for the fifth time in the last hour. Lifting her head, she took note that, despite this, Lynda had still made the most progress of anyone at getting loose; she'd managed to work one of her straitjacketed arms up over her chin and was trying to push it higher over her head as she twisted in tight circles. Still, it was clear to Laurie that it would take Lynda several hours to truly get free, and she doubted they had that much time to work with. And since none of the other girls were close to freeing themselves, their hopes were still slim for escape.

Thus, Laurie was now shifting her strategy to get the gag off her mouth. For the last ten minutes, she'd been rubbing her head back and forth on the table, trying to loosen the knot in the hope she could alert anybody who might happen to come by. It was hard work, however, and for the moment the gag remained as tight as ever. And every second that passed inched things closer to the time when the spikes would inevitably come crashing down on her.

"\_By now they've got to know we're missing\_," she thought, doubling

her efforts, "\_Just get here quick, anyone, before it's too late...!"\_

\* \* \*

><p>10:56 p.m.<p>

"And you know of nowhere else to look?" Samuel asked the Strodes as they pulled away from the Haddonfield Public Library.

"This is everywhere we know for sure Laurie goes regularly," Mr. Strode sighed, "I'm sorry, Mr. Smith, but this is the best we can do."

"Well, I suppose that's all you can ask for," Samuel grunted, wishing he could tell the Strodes something better; clearly, and not that surprisingly, the strain of the situation was starting to get to them. While going into detail about Michael's escape from Smith's Grove earlier in the hunt with them, he hadn't bothered to tell them what would have happened to Laurie in an unaltered timeline, or what her ultimately grisly fate over twenty years from now would have been; he could tell they probably wouldn't be able to take it at the moment.

He abruptly wretched again and slumped forward onto the wheel. There was the blare of an air horn as he drifted into the opposite lane, into the path of an oncoming truck. "Watch it!" Mrs. Strode leaned over the seat and pulled the wheel hard to the right just in time, "What is with you!? You've been acting strange all night...!"

"I'm fine, really," Samuel took deep breaths, "As long as my colleague Dr. Loomis is fine, I should be all right as well."

"What's that got to do with anything?" Mr. Strode frowned. Samuel didn't answer, for they'd reached the Myers house. The other searchers were already there, and they didn't look that good themselves. "Just got the call," Sheriff Brackett looked almost faint as they approached, "Three more missing person reports. One of them's Annie. If anything happens..."

"It's OK, Lee," Mr. Strode patted him on the back, "We know what you're going through."

"Just where the hell are we supposed to look anymore!?" the sheriff punched the hood of his cruiser in disgust, "We've searched every inch of this damn town and got nothing!"

"Wait," the younger Loomis raised his hand, realization spreading on his face, "We haven't looked everywhere. We haven't looked here."

He pointed at the Myers house behind them. "Wait, what's that up there?" Mrs. Strode pointed to the right window on the top floor, where there was a brief flash of white that quickly faded to black.

"That's enough for me," Sheriff Brackett reached through his cruiser window for his radio. "Attention all units, we've got a possible suspicious character here at the Myers house on Elm Street," he ordered his men, "I want all available personnel here in ten minutes

to surround the house; I'm going in myself now."

He drew his flashlight and gun. "Everyone stay behind me," he instructed the others, leading the way towards the house.

"Right," both Loomises drew their own guns as well. The older one leaned towards the younger one and whispered softly, "You've still got it?"

The younger Loomis lifted the deadly disc from his pocket. "Good," his older self nodded, "Once we find him, get the mask off. If it's a younger Michael, put the disc on him where he can't brush it off, then run like hell."

"What're you two going on about?" Sheriff Brackett called back to them from the porch.

"Nothing," Samuel told him quickly, gesturing for his younger self to put the disc away again. Shrugging, the sheriff tugged on the door knob, but it refused to open. Stepping back, he gave it a sharp kick. With the cracking of wood, the door collapsed inwards. The five adults cautiously entered the house. "Laurie?" Mrs. Strode called out loudly into the darkness.

"Shhh!" Loomis hissed at her, "If he is here, you might spook him if...what have we here?"

Over in the corner, lying against the wall, were Annie and Lynda's flashlights, still glowing brightly. Both Loomises picked them up. "It appears we weren't the first ones to try coming here," the younger one proclaimed, "I think..."

There came the sound of a door creaking from the second floor. Everyone fell silent and tensed up. "I'll check that out," Samuel whispered, inching towards the stairs, "Doctor, come with me. Sheriff, you and the Strodes look for secret panels. Yell if you see him."

The two Loomises slowly ascended the stairs. "His sister's room first?" the younger one inquired.

"Yes," Samuel nodded, "That sounds like the best ticket."

The door to Judith's room was partially closed when they reached it-certainly not how Loomis had left it when he and the sheriff had stopped by earlier. No sounds could be heard from within. Samuel flattened himself against the wall and raised his hand. Counting down from three with his fingers, he kicked the door all the way open-and then without warning spun around. "Down!" he shouted, firing off a shot. Loomis hit the deck just in time. He looked up to see a dark Shape fall to the floor behind him; it had been raising a knife above him. "How'd you know...!?" he stammered.

"Pin him down!" Samuel ordered, "And get his mask off, quick! We have to know!"

Loomis threw himself on top of Michael and strained to hold him down. "Hold still, Michael!" he ordered him, "This is for your own good!" He reached for the mask...



Only to have Michael slash his wrist with the knife. Loomis yelled in pain and rolled off him. Up the hall, Samuel howled in agony and clutched his own wrist. Michael leaped to his feet and raised the knife over his doctor again...

...and staggered as two more shots rang out. "Freeze it, mister!" Sheriff Brackett yelled, standing on the top step with his gun smoking, "Drop that knife right now and tell me where my daughter is!"

Michael instead pushed past Loomis and charged into Judith's room. The sheriff squeezed off five more shots at him before he dove out the window with a loud shattering of glass. "Great!" Brackett growled, slapping the railing in disgust, "There goes any chance we had of interrogating him!"

"You may get another chance," Loomis heaved himself to his feet, clutching his bleeding wrist, "He's not dead."

"What do you mean he's not dead!?" Sheriff Brackett was astounded at this prediction, "I definitely hit him four times, and no one can survive a fall from this height!"

"He can," Samuel hobbled towards them, leaning even heavier on his cane, "We'd better get back downstairs; he'll be back inside before we know it. And before he does return, let's keep looking for those young women; I have the distinct feeling our time-and theirs-is almost up."

\* \* \*

><p>Down in the chamber, Laurie's spirits rose as she heard voices in the house above. She started rubbing her head harder against the table. The gag was starting to loosen a bit, but she needed more time. In the meantime, she started crying out as loud as it would allow, hoping it would somehow attract the newcomers' attention.<p>

Out of the corner of her eye, she noticed the Shape glancing up at the ceiling as well. It shook its head, then snapped its fingers. Twisting her head to the left, she could just make out the old man and hunchback serving the Shape bending down and picking up something from the floor: gasoline cans, she realized a moment later. The Shape walked up to the coffin behind the operating table-inside which Janet could still be heard throwing herself around frantically-and pointed grimly at it. "\_Oh no!"\_ Laurie realized with a cold shudder as the other two men began pouring the gasoline over the coffin, "\_He's\_ \_going to start doing whatever he's been planning now!"\_

Her fear amplified even higher, however, when the Shape turned towards her and gave her yet another of its haunting looks. Then to her utter horror, it began pouring even more gasoline over \_her\_. Shaking violently, she watched as it dumped the rest of the can onto the spikes above her. It then walked out of sight behind the tombstone above her head, only to return with a flaming torch, which it used to light each individual spike. Satisfied at least for the moment, it gave her one more cold, blank stare before walking away again.

"\_Come on!"\_ she begged the gag, jerking her head up and down, "\_Slip

off, please!"\_

The sound of a valve of some kind being cranked made her look up again. The Shape was turning a wheel attached to the chamber Lynda was locked in. And water was now rapidly pouring in from the bottom. Panicked, Lynda was making sharp downward jerks to try and get her feet out of the stocks holding her upside-down, but Laurie knew she didn't have the time to make that work. She followed the Shape as it trudged over to the chair Annie was strapped to and picked up what were definitely electrodes from the back of the chair. Annie saw them coming and jerked her head as far away from the Shape as she could with a loud scream of terror into her gag. The Shape grabbed her hair and yanked her back towards itself so it could slip the electrodes snugly around her head. Annie flashed Laurie a look of pure, unadulterated terror just before the Shape pulled a black hood over her head. This galvanized Laurie to try harder with her own gag.

But she still froze up when the Shape approached her again. It snapped its fingers, and its associates began locking metallic barricades along the sides and ends of the table, effectively penning Laurie inside. The Shape leaned over the side and gave her one last emotionless look before slipping another hood over her head.

"He's going to release the spikes now!" she realized, "It's now or never!"\_

And fortunately, it was at that moment she felt the gag's knot starting to slip. She shook her head hard until she felt her mouth fall free. "HELP!" she screamed as loud as she possibly could, "SOMEBODY HELP US PLEASE!"

\* \* \*

><p>"Did you hear that!?" Mrs. Strode cried desperately to the sheriff and both doctors as they came charging down the stairs, "It's Laurie, right down...!"<p>

"There, yes," Loomis had also heard the cries. He pointed to the closet door and kicked it in. "Through there," he noticed the big hole in the wall, "And we'd best hurry!."

The five of them pounded down the stairs behind the hole. "HELP!" Laurie was continuing to scream at the end of the tunnel, "PLEASE SOMEBODY HELP US! GET...OOOOOOOOOOWWWWWW! SOMEBODY...MMMMMMFFFFFFF!"

Abruptly the would-be rescue party ran into the chamber's stone door. "How's this supposed to open!?" Sheriff Brackett shouted, pushing the door with all his might.

"I don't think it's meant to be opened!" Loomis started pushing himself, "But we have to try nonetheless! Everyone, put your weight into it!"

\* \* \*

><p>In a flash, Michael zipped across the chamber and delivered a harsh slashing to his sister's arm. He then reached under the hood and pulled the gag back over her mouth. But the damage had already been done. In a matter of seconds he heard the thumping of footsteps

coming down the stairs, followed by the thuds of the intruders trying to break the door in.<p>

"\_They're too late\_," he thought with a dark smile. It was a hair disappointing that he couldn't wait until the symbolic midnight hour to carry out his sinister deeds, but no matter.

He snapped his fingers at Dr. Clugg, who put his hand on the switch that would activate the electric chair and incinerate the curly-haired girl. He repeated the gesture with Klaus, who took the torch Michael handed to him and raised it over the gas-soaked coffin the popular girl was locked in. Michael himself walked behind Judith's tombstone and took hold of the rope that would drop the burning spikes onto his sister. A loud thumping made him briefly look up to see the blonde throwing her entire body against the glass of the water torture cell in a frantic attempt to smash it as the water rapidly rose over her head. It wouldn't work, Michael knew; the glass was a whole lot thicker than that.

His sister was crying loudly. Michael was ready to ease her troubles once and for all. He started to pull the rope...

## 15. An Unexpected Twist of Fate

"Put some more muscle into it!" Samuel shouted to the rest of his group as they hammered away at the heavy concrete chamber door, "We're almost out of time!"

"Do you hear something?" heavy breathing had distracted the younger Loomis. Something was coming at them from behind. Something very powerful. "Hit the ground!" he yelled as the dark Shape that was the Michael of the present lunged forward toward them. Loomis's warning was heeded by all, and the Michael of the present sailed over everyone and slammed hard into the chamber door, cracking it open off its hinges. Everyone quickly rushed into the chamber. "Don't you dare!" Samuel shouted at the future Michael, who was pulling the spike bed's rope. He lunged at his once and future nemesis, too late to stop the spikes from fallingâ€|

Until Mr. Strode leaped forward like a man possessed and caught the spike bed in mid-descent. "Laurie, hold on, we'll get you out of here!" he told her, straining hard with the spike bed, which was too heavy for him to hold up for long. "Caroline, unlock her!"

Mrs. Strode rushed up and started fumbling around with the straps holding Laurie down. On the table, Laurie was able to shake the hood off her head. "Oh thank God you're here!" she sobbed to her parents once she'd slipped the now looser gag off again, "I was so scared! He was trying toâ€|!"

"Hurry up, Caroline, it's slipping!" Mr. Strode called out through gritted teeth. The spikes were inching lower again despite his best efforts. His wife struggled with the last strapsâ€|

Neither of them noticing the Shape on the floor getting back up and drawing its knife. Slashing at Samuel on the floor and making a large gash on his shoulder, it advanced toward Mr. Strode, raising the knife high. Samuel grabbed Michael's legs at the last minute, causing him to fall. His blade, though, still made contact with Mr. Strode's

leg. He groaned and released the bed of spikes just seconds after his wife had finished freeing their daughter and yanked her off the table. The spikes hit the table with such force that it was smashed clean in two. Laurie buried her face in her mother's chest

Until she felt the Shape grab her and pull her away. "No, let me go!" she shrieked, trying to pry away from it. It put the knife to her throat and prepared to slash. At the last second, though, it was broadsided by ANOTHER SHAPE? "What?" she gasped, shocked to see two similarly dressed people now rolling around the floor apparently trying to choke each other.

"Move to the side, young lady, to the side!" the younger Loomis could be heard shouting. She turned to see him waving at Lynda to move herself to the side inside the glass case. He then aimed his gun at the opposite side, prompting a wide-eyed Lynda to jerk as far away as possible. Loomis fired into the water torture cell, shattering it and sending all the water inside cascading all over the floor. A loud groan rang out to Laurie's left, where she saw Sheriff Brackett trying to choke out the older man, who had his hand on the switch to Annie's electric chair. It was in fact now this man let go of the switch under the pressure of the choke, but squirmed out of the sheriff's grasp when he tried to handcuff him and stumbled around the room. She followed him with her gaze...

...until her attention was distracted by both Shapes leaping to their feet. One then charged directly at Loomis, brandishing its knife. Loomis shot it out of his hand. "It's over, Michael; don't go for it again," he warned his patient. Michael dove for the knife anyway and lunged at him, but it was at this moment that the still hypnotized Klaus aimlessly wandered into the killer's path. Michael's blade thus ended up in the hunchback's hump, causing Klaus to emit a loud howl before slumping forward. Michael shoved the body toward Loomis and took off again, only to be hit in the side again by the other Michael. The two of them fell onto the coffin Janet was locked in, shattering it. Locked in chains, a terrified Janet rolled under a table and out of harm's way while both killers continued fighting with each other. Both Loomises observed the fight with raised eyebrows. "How are we supposed to know which is which!?" the younger version asked, worried.

"I can't help you there," the older one said, sounding frustrated, "We're just going to have to take a shot in the dark and hope it's the right one. Get it ready and take your pick."

The younger Loomis produced the destructive disc and rushed toward the brawling Michaels. One of them he couldn't tell which one from where he was standing snapped its fingers as it saw him approach, and the next thing the doctor knew, he was set upon by the equally hypnotized Dr. Clugg. The deranged magician punched him several times, knocking the disc away into a corner, and raised a surgical knife

Then sank to the ground as three more gunshots tore into him. "Thanks," Loomis called to Sheriff Brackett, whose gun was smoking again.

"I could tell we need it with these guys," the sheriff, said, running over to the electric chair to release his daughter, "Need cuffs?"

"I've got all I need right here...around here somewhere...", Loomis got down on his knees and searched around for the disc. Finding it, he flicked the activation switch and ran back over to where the Michaels were fighting. "\_Pick right and\_ \_the terror ends now before it even starts\_", he reminded himself mentally, "\_Pick wrong and he'll probably get away and kill again. I hate to do it this way, but eenie, meenie, meinie, MOE!"\_

He grabbed the Michael on top, jerked him to his feet, and tossed the disc into his mouth. The Michael in question abruptly swallowed it in shock. "Get him outside and bar the door!" the older Loomis yelled at him, "Or we'll all go up with him!"

The younger Loomis dragged the now ready to blow Michael toward the door, taking full advantage of the fact his adversary was still in shock. "Everyone down!" he yelled as he tossed Michael outside the chamber and braced the door shut as best he could. Moments later the sound of a huge explosion rocked the entire Myers house. Loomis dared to look outside once the blast had subsided. Only a few ashes remained visible to indicate someone had once been there. "Did it work?" he called to his future self.

"HELP!" came another cry before Samuel could answer. The other Michael, looking very much alive and well, had now cornered the entire Strode family against the far wall and was about to bring his knife down on Laurie again. Loomis ran toward him, but it was clear he wouldn't get there in timeâ€|

But it was then that the remaining Michael let out a loud howlâ€"the first sound he'd made since Loomis had first known himâ€"and dropped the knife. He staggered backwards, his hands on his temples, shaking wildlyâ€|

And then abruptly faded away into thin air, leaving no trace behind. "YES!" an ecstatic Samuel clapped his hands in sheer ecstasy from the far corner, "We chose the right one! He's been erased!"

"Erased?" a still shaking Mr. Strode asked as he and his family walked cautiously out of the corner, "Will somebody please tell me what happened just now? Where'd he go?"

"It doesn't matter," the younger Loomis put a joyous arm around him, "The important point is, he won't be coming back. He'll never bother your family or anyone else again." The doctor approached a sobbing Laurie. "He didn't hurt you too much, did he?" asked, putting a sympathetic arm around her.

Laurie shook her head. Of course, there was the throbbing pain in her arm from where the Shape had cut her, but she wasn't noticing that as much at the moment. All she was concerned about was the fact she was alive. She cried tears of relief into her parents' shoulders for a good three minutes while everyone else in the chamber was released. "Laurie," a still-shaking herself Janet hesitantly approached her after she'd been released, "I just want to say, thanks for trying to comfort me back there. I think I should say I've misjudged you. I hope you can forgive me."

Her face was rife with genuine sorrow for her past actions. Laurie nodded firmly. "I can always forgive, Janet," she told her with a

small smile. She looked past her as her friends walked slowly towards the chamber door. "Hey," she called softly to them, "I really appreciate you two coming to try and save me."

"Didn't we tell you we'd do anything for you last night, Laurie?" Annie asked her between her own tears.

"Why don't we all just get out of here and get everyone to the hospital?" Sheriff Brackett put an arm around his daughter, "I think we've all had enough excitement for one night."

"Amen to that," Mrs. Strobe commented. One by one, they all filed out of the chamber. Samuel was the last to go. As he approached the door, he abruptly felt the need to no longer use his cane, so he let it clatter to the floor and found he could walk normally. Not only that, a hand to his face found his scar tissue there disappearing. He smiled warmly, the first time in years he had done so.

"You went too far, Michael," he told the killer's ashes on the floor outside, "And it cost you. Now you no longer exist, and thus you never killed anyone past tonight. You failed our little game in the end."

He struck a match and ignited the ashes, apparently just for good measure. As they burned, he turned off the chamber lights and whistled as he walked up the stairs after everyone else. The future when he got back to it was going to be a much brighter place.

\* \* \*

><p>EPILOGUE: 20 YEARS LATER<p>

"and so in conclusion, the moral of the story is that despite Reverend Dimmsdale's sins with Hester, the fact is that Roger Chillingworth, in the course of his actions, committed a greater sin," a grown Laurie Strobe told her Haddonfield High literature class, "The abuse of a human soul. When you make revenge your only path, as he did, you have nothing else to live for."

She heard a low knock and saw a familiar face standing outside the classroom door just as the bell rang. "So for Monday, start reading chapter one of The Crucible," she informed the students as they filed eagerly out of the classroom, "I want to get that all finished up by Christmas."

She leaned against the blackboard and waited until everyone had filed out before approaching her visitor. "Janet, it's good to see you again," she said, hugging the woman.

"And it's good to see the most popular teacher in this old school holding up well," the grown Janet smiled at her. Her gratitude with Laurie for having comforted her during their ordeal twenty years prior had since led to the blossoming of a firm friendship over the years. Indeed, it had now been common for Janet to pop in on Laurie's classes at least once a year despite her heavy workload as a fundraiser for the Illinois Democratic Party in Springfield. "How many years have they voted you their favorite now?" she asked, examining some of the notations on the blackboard.

"Three," Laurie smiled, "It's good to know I'm making a positive

impact on other people's lives."

"Well if anyone was going to stay in this town and make it good, it was going to be you," Janet remarked, "The others are outside; we'd better go now if we want to reserve seats early for the reunion."

Laurie nodded. She had been looking forward to the Class of 1979's 20-year reunion ever since she'd received the letter about it in the mail. She placed several tests she still had to grade in her briefcase; she'd have to get them later. She followed an admittedly upbeat and bouncy Janet out Haddonfield High's front door, where two more familiar faces awaited her. "Lynda, Annie, welcome back," she hugged each of them in turn, "I'm glad you could make it."

"Hey, it wouldn't be a complete party if we weren't invited, would it?" Lynda asked mischievously. Her near drowning had had a profound effect on her, and immediately after leaving the hospital that fateful night, she'd sworn off alcohol, a vow she'd miraculously (to Laurie's point of view) managed to keep over the years. Although she'd barely scraped through college, she now had a reasonably steady paycheck as a secretary for a pharmaceuticals firm, she'd told Laurie often over the phone. She'd had three children so far, and from what Laurie could see now, a fourth was soon on the way. Annie had similarly sworn off cigarettes after the crisis. She'd been divorced from her first husband and had been laid off from a textile factory a few months back, and was now struggling as a waitress to support her son, who was now fourteen and itching for a career in the big leagues, until a better-paying job came along.

"You know, before we go," the latter commented, running a hand through her hair, "I was wondering if we could go back there, you know, just to bury the memories. It has been twenty years, after all."

"Now why would we want to go back there?" Janet frowned, "I mean, it's not evenâ€|"

"Actually, I think that's a good point," Laurie interceded, "I know what she means, and I'd like to lay some things to rest too."

And so it was about ten minutes later when the four of them had pulled up in front of the Myers house. Or at least where it had once stood. Following the incident, it had been roped off and eventually, in 1983, demolished. A daycare center now stood in its place, and even now in the afternoon young children were playing on the front lawn, oblivious to the terrors that had once occurred there. But they weren't the only ones paying solemn tribute to what had once befallen them. Standing there watching the snow-white building that now stood there was a hunched-over figure with a cane. "Dr. Loomis?" Laurie seemed surprised to see him.

"Yes. The ever-popular Mrs. Strode, the pride of Haddonfield, I presume?" the doctor greeted her warmly. After the demise of Michael Myers twenty years ago, he had received a special commendation from the governor's office for "foresight and wisdom in a crisis." He had been subsequently promoted to the head of Smith's Grove and had consulted on other cases around the country that concerned homicidal mask-wearing maniacs over the years. He'd retired three years ago, an Illinois legend. "I had a feeling you'd all come," he told the women

as he leaned on his cane and observed the children playing in front of them.

"That Mr. Smith who was with you couldn't come?" Lynda inquired.

"Oh, he was occupied at the moment," Loomis told her, a twinkle in his eye, "I told him I'd tell him everything. You know, when I think back on what happened here so long ago, the one thing that comes to mind is how easily it could have gone the other way."

"I've wondered that myself," Janet remarked, "I mean, the thought of death really woke me up to how short life is, and that we should live it to the best."

"Indeed," Loomis nodded, his gaze on Annie and Lynda, "We do only have one life to live. I've always felt it's best to take advantage of it, because you never do know when the end will come."

For a good ten minutes, the five of them stood there, letting the memories come back and soak in. "Well," Annie glanced her watch eventually, "That food's not going to wait forever. We'd best get going."

The woman started to walk off. Laurie hung back for a minute. "Dr, Loomis," she told the old man, "I've been thinking lately, what did set Michael Myers off? You never did tell me why he was after me in all these years."

"Why did he come after you?" Loomis thought this over for a moment. He smiled, "Well, your guess would be as good as mine. We never really found anything out ourselves. You never know with some people, my dear Mrs. Strode. Now why don't you go off and join your friends? From what I hear, you spend too much time in the classroom anyway."

"So my son tells me all the time," Laurie laughed. Loomis smiled harder as he watched her bound off with the others. He hadn't really wanted to tell her the whole story when she didn't need to know. Life was dark enough most of the time anyway, he figured. He watched the four women drive off, totally unaware of what their fates might have been had Michael won. He was glad these dark destinies had now never happened now that Michael had been erased from existence. He was still smiling as he trudged up the street away from the site of the Myers house and the bad memories that no longer had come to fruition, toward the downtown section of Haddonfield, once again decked out in splendor for Halloween.

THE END

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file.